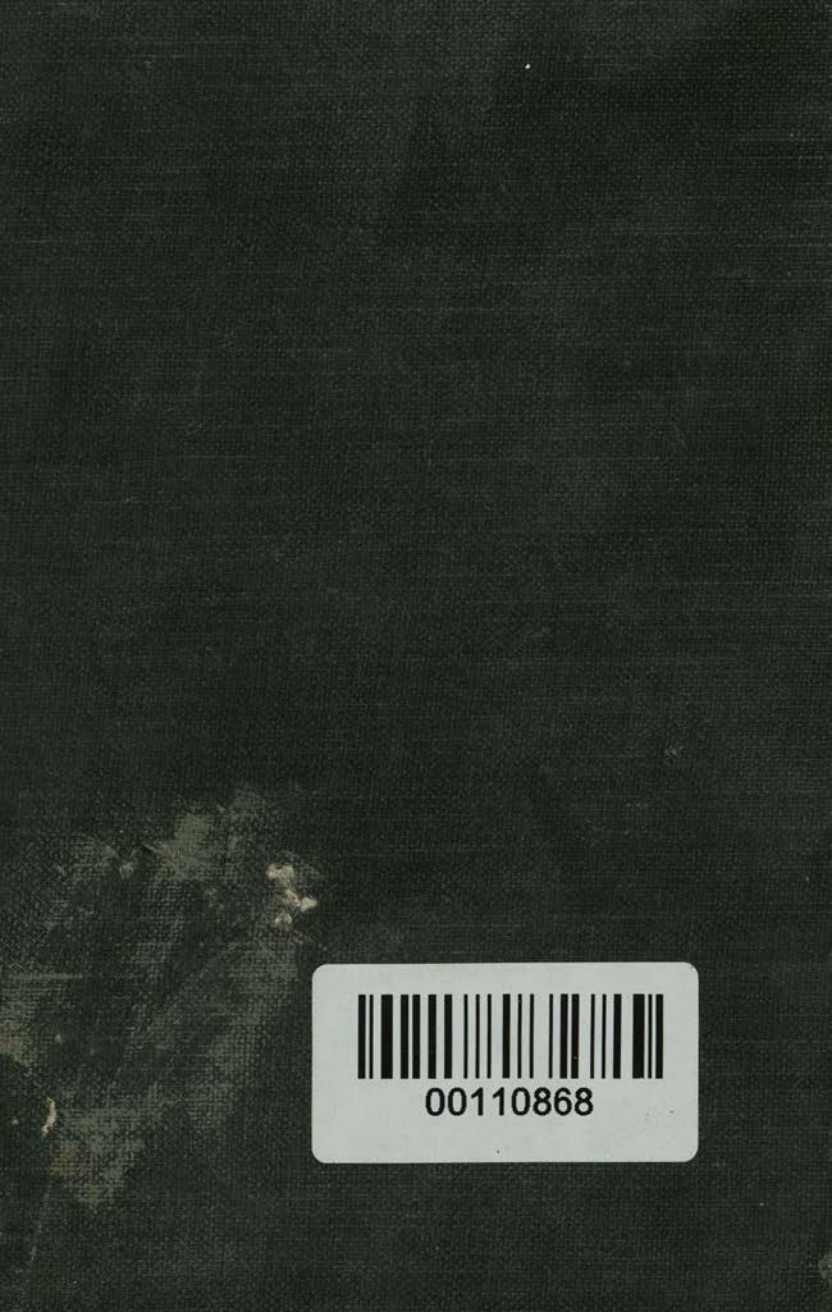
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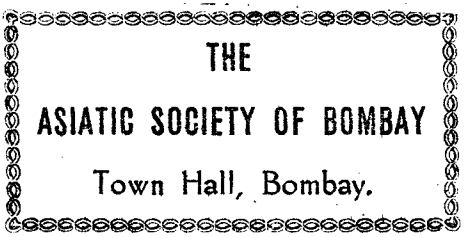

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SERMONS

PREACHED IN RUGBY SCHOOL CHAPEL

IN

1867—1869.

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1867 – 1869.

BY THE RIGHT REV.

FREDERICK TEMPLE, D.D.

Lord Bishop of Exeter.

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SERMON I.

THE INWARD LIFE.

ST. MATTHEW XV. 11.

'Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.'

I DO not mean this afternoon to speak of the immediate purpose of these remarkable words, but of one of the general principles which lie behind them, and a principle of which there are several other illustrations in the New Testament, and which we recognise as a commonplace in morals. The contrast here is plain enough: it is between inner things and outer things. There is a perpetual temptation to ascribe a weight to the latter which does not belong to them; and in spite of our seeing the absurdity of this we slip into the same mistake repeatedly, and repeatedly need to have recalled to us the truth that man's life in all respects, in its happiness, in its power, in its purity, is determined by what is within, not by what is without. The Pharisees laid great stress on what a man ate, and maintained that to eat an unclean thing was defiling. Our Lord teaches that purity is hurt by what comes from within, and by that alone.

Compare with this our Lord's answer to those who asked Him when the kingdom of God should come. He replied that 'the kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, Lo here or lo there, for behold the kingdom of God is within you.' The coming of the kingdom in the true and real sense is not a thing that can be seen at all. It is not a change in the outer life; it is a change in the inner. A man steps into the kingdom of God without there being any such change in his outer life as would show to ordinary observers that any remarkable event had befallen him. He goes on from step to step in that kingdom, and yet no one shall perceive it. It is within and not without.

Again, compare with this the words put into the mouth of Abraham, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.' The rich man thought, as most men are inclined to think, that the reason why his brethren like himself did not believe was that the teaching was not forcible enough, striking enough, supernatural enough: 'if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.' How natural to say this! How natural to fancy that if you had this proof or that demonstration you would believe much more readily than you do! But no: this is but the common mistake. The difficulty of belief in spiritual truth is not outside; it is inside. Men find it hard to believe, not because they have not proof enough, but because they have not faith enough. Alter the circumstances, and you may depend on it the same men would be much the same. Those who

could not be reached by the power which breathes through the Old Testament certainly could not be reached by a mere miracle. In some ages such men would ascribe the miracle to Beelzebub. And in other ages they would deny that there had been such a miracle, and maintain that it was some sort of delusion. And in all ages, whether the ground for disbelief be a good one or a bad one to stand on, it would be found that a man who had not faith within could never be converted by proof without.

Or again, compare our Lord's saying, 'If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.' That is the true darkness: He means the darkness of having no eyes. There is such a thing as the darkness of ignorance: but that is a trifle; it is external; it may at any moment be set right. But the true darkness is that which has its cause within. That darkness may stand in the blaze of the noonday sun and yet see nothing.

Or again, compare St. James's warning, 'Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.' How much the warning is needed! We are in the midst of temptations, and not unnaturally we say that Providence puts them in our path. God who governs all things has so arranged that this occasion of sin, this allurement to evil, this tempting opportunity, this direct summons from a fellow-sinner, has now beset us. Yes: but what makes this

thing a temptation? Why does it allure us? What makes it attractive? What makes it dangerous? Is it a temptation to every one alike? Would every one be equally liable to seduction from it? No: its power over us comes from within, from our own selves. The thing, whatever it is, is no doubt by God's arrangement. But God did not make it dangerous nor tempting. That is due to our own condition, to something in us, to our own nature it may be, or to our past habits, or to our having weakened ourselves by wrong self-indulgence. The evil character which belongs to it is put into it by us. Its power over us entirely comes from us. In this instance, too, man ever determines his own life. One man walks unscathed through every attraction to evil. Another man falls almost without any temptation at all. Whence this great difference? Not in their circumstances, but in the men themselves.

Now of course I know well, and you know well too, that there is another side to all this. It must be granted that our outer life has a great, a very great influence over us. It would be absurd to deny, what every day's experience proves, that in some circumstances we can walk tolerably straight, and in others we find it exceedingly difficult to do so. Our Lord fully recognises this. For this is the basis of His severest warning, 'If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, than having two hands or two feet to be cast into hell fire.' This plainly implies that so far from outer circumstances being nothing, these are

cases in which it is the most imperative of all duties, a duty to be discharged at all costs, to get away from outward things that you know to be a temptation to you. Such and such things try your strength too much. This kind of reading ends with unfitting you for your work; and that kind suggests wrong thoughts; and that kind wastes your time. This company leads you astray. This indulgence, though innocent in itself, yet always, and as far as you can see irresistibly, leads you to another indulgence which is not innocent. In all these cases it is your plain duty if you possibly can to avoid what thus tempts you more than you can bear. And it would be absurd to say, Outer circumstances do not really determine the character: I must get strength within and then I shall be superior to these temptations. The first thing you have to do is to avoid sinning. And if the way to keep from sinning is to avoid certain temptations, why then you must avoid those temptations, and not philosophise about the matter.

It is, I say, undeniable that outer things have the very greatest power over us. But this is not really at all inconsistent with what I said before. They have a very great power; but it is we who give them that power. And getting away from them is often the best way, and in some cases the only way, to break down that power. But it is only the way to do so. It is the beginning, but only the beginning and not the end. If you avoid temptation and by so doing escape from a sin, you have done well; but you have not done all. You have taken the right path to win purity and strength, but to take

the right path is not to reach the goal. And after you have avoided the temptation, and by so doing have avoided the sin, you have yet to do much more before you have raised yourself, as a Christian is bound to endeavour to raise himself, above the sin altogether.

Man determines his own life from within himself. What is it that makes a man happy or unhappy? It is, in the last resort, his setting his heart on things above or on things on the earth. If you set your heart on getting what you cannot always get, you *must* meet with much unhappiness. What is the cure? to battle for your desire and be miserable when it does not come? No; to determine that you will not seek it, but seek God's will instead, and let all else come or go as He may please. You cannot, do what you will you cannot always bend all that happens to your wishes. Then try the other plan and bend your wishes to suit what happens, knowing that you are in the hands of a Father that loves you dearly. What, again, is it that makes a man dutiful or not? Is it not, in the last resort, the resolution of his own will? If a man undertakes his duty with a sort of hope that somehow it will be made easy to him; somehow or other it will not require any great sacrifice; somehow or other he will be able to serve God with half his life and have the other half for himself: he will assuredly find that duty is out of his reach. If a man fancies that his failures are to be assigned to the company he is in, to the allurements which surround him, he will certainly fail often. If a man when he goes wrong assigns the fault to the attraction

and not to himself; to the strength of the charm and not to the fault of his own will; he is not even beginning to go right. He must look to himself and not to his temptations, if he would really find the evil. What is it that makes a man succeed or fail in what he undertakes? Is it this little accident or that little accident; a piece of luck; a fortunate stroke? If what he is trying to do is worth the doing, most certainly accident will have very little to do with his success or failure, in the long run nothing at all. Even what seems luck is very often in reality the reward either of perseverance and patience waiting till the right moment came, or of a judgment trained by self-restraint and labour knowing and seizing its own proper opportunity.

Now my reason for saying all this now is this. Work is closing; enjoyment is beginning. Away now with many temptations, with many irksome duties which in their way were temptations also. Away now with many mistaken companionships to which we are fain to ascribe many of our faults. Away now with many tiresome restraints. Away now with anxieties about our work. If our consciences have been ill at ease sometimes lately, now at any rate we are going where we shall get away from many temptations, where we shall be out of reach of most of the evil that has tried us here. We shall leave behind us so much that has been associated with our faults that it almost seems as if we should leave behind the faults themselves. I am speaking of those whose consciences are awake. I am speaking of those who have made some effort, though it may be but

a feeble effort, to please God and to obey their consciences. To such it is natural to feel that now they will get away from their chief hindrances, from their worst enemies. But they will not get away from the great hindrance of all: they will not get away from themselves. They will find after a very little while that they are still at home what they were at school. They will find that if they do not commit precisely the same faults they commit corresponding faults. They will find that evil thoughts are not long dependent on place, nor are bad tempers, nor is selfish indulgence, nor is idleness, nor is want of straightforwardness, nor is inconsiderateness. For a very little while change of place makes a difference; but only for a very little while. Use it well. Use the little interval during which old temptations are powerless, to take away their power. Watch the return of old sins and keep them out as they are returning. Strive to keep the thoughts pure from day to day, and fight against the first sinful feeling or imagination that besets the soul. Lift up the aims to a more unselfish, to a more devoted, to a more highminded life. Do this and you will have good reason to bless the change which gave you the opportunity. But dream that you are free without effort and without need of future effort, and you will find to your sorrow that all true life for good or for evil is within, and that all former sins are coming back in greater strength than ever.

July 28, 1867.

SERMON II.

GOD THE SOURCE OF ALL THINGS.

ST. JAMES i. 17.

'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.'

THE fundamental conception of God is that of the giver. And more particularly this is the conception which the Bible gives us of God the Father. He is the source of all things. To Him, in the first place, all created things owe the gift of existence. Though St. Paul tells the Colossians that by the Son were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth; all things created by Him and for Him; and again, tells the Corinthians that to us Christians there is one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things; yet he also teaches that there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things. So that in his doctrine the Father is still the origin of the existence of all. If the Son created all things, yet He created them by His Father's power and will, and never is it said of Him that He is the original source of their existence. That belongs to God the Father only.

And as this is true of all created things and persons, so is it also of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. They

both come from God the Father. He is the source of their existence as He is of all other existence. And as our Lord eternally receives from His Father the gift of existence, so does He receive every other gift. He declares that He has nothing of Himself. He can do nothing of Himself but only what He seeth the Father do. He does not bear witness of Himself. He comes not in His own name but in His Father's name. As the Father hath taught Him, so He speaks. He spoke not of Himself, but the Father gave Him commandment what He should say and what He should speak. All thoughts about the nature of God and about the relations of the Son to His Father must be perpetually restrained and crossed by the thought that our intellects are utterly unable to grasp such a matter at all. Yet here and there we sometimes see analogies that make us rather feel than see some dim conception of what is so far above us. And so here it would seem, that as there is an excellence in giving, and also an excellence in receiving, the relation of the Father to His Divine Son unites both these excellences in one. For God the Father giveth all, and His only-begotten Son receiveth all. And the One is supreme as the source of all good, and the Other as the receiver of all good: that there, in the union of Father and Son, all good of every kind, whether of giving or of receiving, should be united.

But to go a step further, as God our Father is the source of all existence, so also He is the source of all happiness. All pleasure is superadded to existence, and comes from Him, revealing His nature

still further. For there was no need when He created us that He should have made us capable of pleasure at all. Existence is possible without it. No doubt, now that it is created, it plays a large part in maintaining the existence to which it is attached. No doubt, as things are in the struggle for existence, any living thing which was not upheld by the pleasures which occasionally make existence happy, would probably soon perish. If there were absolutely no pleasure in living, nor in the functions of life, nor in the various processes by which life is maintained, many living things would give up the efforts by which life is kept from perishing and would disappear. But that is taking things as they now are. But, as far as we can see, things need not have been as they are. Nature might have gone on without there being any such thing as pleasure at all. And it is precisely this creation of pleasure which first makes us feel that the creation is due to a living person and not to a dead mechanical law. The regularity and beautiful order of nature does not supply us with a higher thought than that of a piece of clockwork. Mere machinery might be as orderly, as complex, as wonderfully fitted together part by part. But the creation of creatures capable of happiness, and the gift of happiness to the creatures so made capable of it, this points to something more than machinery, this speaks not only to the brain but to the heart, this is the first thing that tells not only of the Creator's supremacy in intelligence, but of His goodness, of His love, of His delight in contemplating the happiness of living beings. A Being that

finds pleasure in giving pleasure must be good; for that is the very definition of goodness.

But yet, once more, as God is the giver of happiness, so is He finally the giver of righteousness or holiness. This is His last and highest character. This is His last and highest gift. Righteousness or holiness differs no doubt from all other gifts, in that the receiver is necessarily not a passive receiver. The gift of existence implies absolutely no action whatever in the thing created. Plainly enough, the thing not yet created cannot have any kind of share in its own creation. And the same may be said of all natural capacities, whether moral or intellectual, whether good dispositions or clever minds; all these are in the first instance given without any action whatever in the receiver. We are quite passive, and God bestows on us life and the power of thought, and various natural graces of character and various faculties of mind, and we have nothing to do with the matter; but simply we are so made. So, again, pleasure is often given without any co-operation whatever in him who receives and enjoys the pleasure. God gives happiness in many ways without our having done anything whatever to procure it. Some pleasures no doubt we get for ourselves, and God, it may be said, does not actually give them; He puts them within our reach. But many pleasures He gives out and out. The bodily enjoyment of health and high spirits; the pleasure of fine weather and bright sunshine; the pleasure of seeing whatever is beautiful; many pleasures of society; these are given to us while we are quite passive. We

are so entirely passive that we can hardly be said to receive them; rather we enjoy them. But this last and best gift of righteousness, the gift of a conscientious spirit, of an obedient will, of a religious and devout heart, this gift is never given without of necessity implying that there is some action of our own. And hence it often seems to us that it is not so much to be received as won; that it is not a gift but rather a reward. But this is a mistake. The holiness of heart which makes men the children of God is as much a gift as any other gift can be; nay, in one sense it is more truly a gift, because most other gifts He may send to us by indirect means; but this peculiarly comes from Him, because it is in reality a gift of Himself.

God gives as man gives. He gives and we receive, just as one man may give to another, and that other will receive it at his hands. But God also gives not as man gives. For man can give many things that are not a part of the man himself,—things that come and go, things that perish in the using. Man can give earthly possessions which are all outside a man. He can give pleasure sometimes, which though it enters into a man yet cannot be warranted to abide with him. He can give sympathy in trouble, encouragement in struggles, guidance in perplexity. But he cannot give the *will* to use these things. But God can. God can do what no one else can possibly do. He can lay hold of the very inner essence of the soul, of the one thing which is at once a man's very own, and yet of a spiritual and not of a material nature, the man's will. He can give a

man not only new pleasures, new tastes, new hopes. He can give him a new will. And this gift of a new will is the last and highest of all gifts. For in it is the holiness which God requires of those who come to Him. Herein precisely lies the ultimate difference between what man can do for man and what God can do for man. If one man does another man's duty, then the other need not do it, and does not do it. But God does a man's duty for him by making him do it. Human action for another supersedes the action of that other. But God never supersedes the action of the man whom He is blessing with His aid. If one man aid another, his aid, so far as it goes, puts aside the other man. But if God aids us, we do more, not less; the action is more our own, not less our own. And when He makes us obey Him, our obedience is all the more our own, and though we have received it and it all comes from Him, yet it is truly ours, and brings us very near to Him, and unites us very closely with Him.

So accordingly our Lord declares that no man can come to Him unless the Father draw him. So St. Paul perpetually speaks of the righteousness of God in such a way that we cannot say whether he means the righteousness whereby God Himself is righteousness, or the righteousness which He requires in His servants, or the righteousness which He alone can give and He alone does give. For indeed he means all three. So the Second Epistle of St. Peter speaks of Christians as partakers of the Divine nature. So St. John declares that every man that doeth righteousness is born of

God. So St. James teaches that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.

What is the practical consequence of all this?

It is this. Seek for all good from God. It is good to watch over ourselves and to guard our footsteps carefully. It is more than good, it is indispensable; and that not merely because by God's ordinance that is the appointed way by which we walk towards Him; but still more because that is the best, the surest, the most real expression of true loyalty, that is the truest outpouring of our love for Him, that is the worship whereby the loving Christian soul perpetually puts itself in mind of its absent Lord and Master. But while we must watch our footsteps carefully, it is not in diligent care, it is not in close obedience, it is not in resisting temptation, that in the last resort man can find the gift without which the soul perishes. As a friend of mine, and a former pupil of this school, once said in my hearing many years ago: 'The waters of divine life are not to be procured by diligently storing up what is within you; but by opening the whole heart and soul to what is above you.'

Seek holiness; seek the power of living a Christian life; seek the making of a Christian character from God Himself. Seek it by asking Him for it. Seek it by thinking of Him, and setting your heart on pleasing Him. Seek it by thinking of His character. Seek it by making your heart familiar with His word. Endeavour not only to do your duty here on earth, but to catch if you can the spirit of heaven; for from heaven must the true good come.

This perhaps sounds vague and dreamy. It is not so practical as to bid you do every duty punctually in its turn. It is not so easy to apply to your life as an exhortation to tell precise truth, to control the temper, to obey your superiors. No, it is not; and if we neglect the ordinary routine of duty, then indeed all that I have been saying will be vague and dreamy, and, in fact, impossible. But nevertheless, though the higher life can never be so described in words that it shall not sound unpractical to those who do not seek to attain to it, it is no vague dream. And he who comes to God and asks the gift of righteousness from Him who alone can give it, will assuredly in God's own time recognise how true were the words the Lord once spoke, 'Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened.'

October 13, 1867.

SERMON III.

REVELATION TO BABES.

ST. LUKE X. 21.

'*In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight.*'

I DO not know many truths harder to understand or harder to make into a part of our own lives, than the truth that God's deepest mysteries are not revealed according to any law that we can lay down; not revealed to the thoughtful, nor to the careful, nor to the watchful, nor to the educated, but by some inscrutable rule to those whom our Lord here calls babes. This is, of course, as here put by our Lord, only a part of a larger truth. To the same doctrine belongs the declaration, that in the great day of decision, when God's sudden call to judgment shall make a sharp severance between man and man, two shall be in the field, one shall be taken and the other left; two women shall be grinding together, one shall be taken and the other left; two shall be in one bed, one shall be taken and the other left; that is, that there shall be men to all human

appearance alike, between whom God shall make a deep distinction, choosing some for His own and rejecting others, by a rule entirely His own, because of His deeper knowledge of their nature. To the same head, again, belongs St. Paul's remark, 'Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are.' To the same doctrine, again, belongs that fact which struck St. Paul with so much astonishment that he seems hardly to know how to get over it, namely, the fact that the Jewish nation did not as a whole accept the Gospel of Christ; the very people who by God's own ordinance were selected, preserved, taught, and disciplined for centuries together to teach the true religion to the world, yet in the main rejected the most perfect, the only complete form of that very religion. And St. Paul is driven to say that 'It is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.' He cannot deny that they sought God; he bears record that they have a zeal of God. But still, though they followed after the law of righteousness they had not attained to the law of righteousness. In all these cases the same idea rules: that God selects by rules which man would not have expected, which when he.

knows he can hardly express, and which he can never with certainty apply. We should have expected that the most thoughtful and cultivated would assuredly have been among the first to appreciate the beauty, the spiritual power, the deep truth of the Gospel: We should have expected that the most careful livers, the most observant of the law, would have been among the first to understand how truly the Gospel contained in it the perfection of all law. We should have expected to be able in some degree to foresee what sort of characters would be the readiest to come to the promise of the Cross. But though we know with absolute certainty that God's choice is always just, and that if we saw all that He sees, we should recognise that justice; yet, as things are, even St. Paul can only find an unsearchable mystery, and cannot tell who they are to whom God will reveal His truth.

But in regard to this mystery, there is yet in every passage where it is spoken of or touched upon something to guide the thoughts towards one direction and away from another direction; something which tells, perhaps as much as can be told, but at any rate as much as is needed to give a special turn to our own thoughts and through our thoughts to our lives.

For it is plain that everywhere the expressions that are used about this matter are intended to exalt simplicity and humility above knowledge, and docility above intellect, and the childlike character above that which has strength and force; and the desire to serve God above even self-control, and assuredly the religious

spirit above cultivation and refinement. Knowledge is good, and not only good, but it is a downright duty to seek it, and the knowledge of the truth is one of the levers by which the soul is moved, and he who never seeks it is plainly disobedient to God. And yet very often he who has obtained much knowledge is far inferior to a very ignorant brother who has a simpler spirit, inferior even in the grasp of that very truth which knowledge lays hold of. The man of knowledge can set the other right a thousand times; can correct his expressions, can point out foolish mistakes in his opinions, can guide his conduct, can teach him what to do and what not to do; is, in short, plainly appointed to lead, to rule, to legislate. And yet it will often be seen, when a crisis comes which tests the stuff of which the men are made, that the man of the greater knowledge is made of the baser metal, and that God has not revealed to him what He has revealed to the more ignorant. So again, how impossible it is not to value refinement and gentleness and moderation, and all that comes from true cultivation! How close to religion itself must we reckon the self-restraint, the suspended judgment, the moderation of feeling, the outward ornaments, as it were, and very garb, perhaps in some degree more than the garb, of charity itself, which men get from the highest education! And yet we know well, and our Lord's words and St. Paul's words are enough to show, if we did not know by experience, that very often in times of real temptation, all this proves worth much less than unrefined simplicity or perhaps coarse

and rough integrity. Of course our Lord's words go beyond such instances as these: but such instances as these teach the same truth as a matter of human experience; and our Lord's words go still further in the same direction, and give still greater force and meaning to what experience teaches. For though these instances have in them something strange, yet not so strange but that we can in some degree account for them. But no doubt in our Lord's own time there must have been many instances that seemed still more strange to people then, and would have seemed more strange to us. For there must have been not a few among the Pharisees who were to all appearance devoted observers of God's will, as far as they knew it, thoroughly pious and devout, as far as either they or any other could tell, longing to please God in the precise way in which they had been taught, anxious, vigilant, studious; ready for any self-sacrifice, except the sacrifice of what they had learnt to believe was God's own will. And not a few of these must have remained where they were, unable to discern the truth from mere habit of looking for it in the wrong direction. There must have been among the heathen men with warm hearts and thoughtful heads, who yet had not the courage to accept a Gospel which seemed in a sort of sense to be the property of the uneducated and the poor. Why did not these men come into the fold of God? Because in spite of what men might expect, God did not see in them that true fitness to receive the highest teaching, the absence or presence of which He only can decide on.

Now I began by saying that this is a very hard truth to understand and to make into a part of our own lives. I do not mean that it is hard to believe. To believe it as a matter of opinion, to acknowledge that it is so, is not I think very difficult. We do not generally find it difficult to believe what has plain analogies in the facts of our experience. And there are facts enough within reach to make it not difficult to acknowledge that the quality, whatever it is, which makes some men readier than others to accept the teaching of God, is not a quality that we can precisely define, still less is it one about which we can decide who has it and who has it not. But what is hard is this: to make this opinion a part of ourselves, to work it into our own lives; to bend our wills, our hearts, our enthusiasm in the direction which this doctrine indicates. Thus, for instance, it plainly follows that when we are comparing simplicity and humility of character with strength and force of character, the former are not merely better, but quite infinitely better, belong to a higher kind, have in them a higher nature, come in a higher and truer sense from heaven itself. It is good to be strong of will; nay, it is not only good, it is a duty; and weakness is a sin. But for all that it is better to be childlike and humble; not merely a little better, but quite infinitely better. For the strength will make you a better servant of God, provided you are a servant of His already. But the simplicities of a child will make you His child of itself. Nay, often you will find that true humility is stronger than strength itself. What can give a deeper

impression of a child's weakness than our Lord's prayer for what He knew He could not have, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done'? And yet as we read it we know that no strength can be compared even in strength to that weakness.

There are graces which distinctly belong to the Christian character, and without which that character is undeniably imperfect. And yet these graces seem somehow to belong to earth when compared with others which breathe the very perfume of heaven. And these last, simplicity, humility, forgetfulness of self, absorption in mere love of God's will, these do not strike so much, nor do they indeed apparently do so much service as others. They are much less apparently effective in doing God's will here on earth than zeal, force, resolution, strength; perhaps they are really less effective: but they are distinctly preferred; they are more heavenly; they are nearer to God; they are more full of the spirit of Christ. It is hard to mould our lives on this truth. We see the value of the stronger character so much more clearly. It is the character apparently chosen for almost all the best work. It is put in the forefront. It is entrusted with more to do. Often it is made to rule, to teach, to guide. Often it has the higher honour even from religious men, and in some sense it ought to have the higher honour, for honour is appropriate to it. But if it is to do work that shall last, if it is to be more than part of the machinery whereby God governs the world and the church, it too must

find its secret strength in what is really so far better, purer, more unearthly than itself, the simplicity which in most cases lives unheeded and serves God day and night with the thoughts of a child and the unconscious impulses of a humble spirit.

Seek the graces of God with all your strength; but above all seek the graces that specially belong to heaven. Try hard to be humble, to be free from all conceit, to question your own opinions, to give up your own way, to put simplicity first among all excellences of character, to be ready to think yourself in the wrong, to prefer others to yourself; for this character is nearest to God's heart, and to babes who are of this sort does God reveal His most secret mysteries.

October 20, 1867.

SERMON IV.

SIN AND PAIN.

GALATIANS v. 24.

'And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.'

THERE is a thought which runs through the Old Testament and is, we may say, one of the special characteristics, one of the peculiar instincts of the Hebrew mind, which in the New Testament becomes one of the fundamental parts of the doctrine of our redemption. This thought is the close, the eternal connection of pain with sin. We do not find it so pervading any other literature whatever. That certain great sins, such as that of murder, pursued the sinner with a dreadful vengeance, and seemed as it were to turn into a haunting spirit that could only be laid after vengeance had been taken, we find in the mythology of Greece; and this is no doubt a small part, a fraction of the same thought. And so, again, in India and the East there has always been a readiness to believe that pain had some kind of unearthly mysterious power, and that by enduring strange pains a man might somehow raise himself above the ordinary mortal condition:

and this is not so much a fragment as a distorted caricature of this same Hebrew feeling. For in almost every page of the Old Testament, whether in the history, the poetry, or the prophecy, we are perpetually coming across something to remind us that, according to the notions of the Hebrews, sin and pain were somehow mysteriously joined together and could not be parted. The road from sin back again to innocence or to holiness, the road from God's anger to His forgiveness, the road from impurity to cleanness, always seems to lie through pain. Pain, and pain only, seems to be recognised as having a truly purifying power; and often when God absolutely forgives He does not on that account remit the necessary pain which the forgiven sin has brought upon it, but the penitent after he is forgiven has still to bear his punishment. So Moses, though taken back to the highest favour, yet never enters the promised land, because of his sin long before. So David loses his child, in spite of his fasting and passionate prayers, although he had been already told that 'the Lord hath put away thy sin.' So Josiah's reformation can do nothing to prevent the punishment due to the bloody reign of Manasseh. God accepts repentance and yet often makes no change whatever in His doom. We cannot of course, it was not to be expected that we could, trace the working of this out into minute detail. I am not prepared to say that every separate sin must receive its own separate punishment. We are here on the verge of mysteries; and it is impossible not to be perpetually conscious that if we try to define too

precisely we are in danger of pretending to knowledge that is beyond our reach, and so of making foolish and perhaps mischievous mistakes. Let us be content with the general thought, one of the legacies handed down to us by the people whom God selected as His preachers to the world, that sin and pain are so bound together that the escape from sin is only through the gate of pain.

This thought is itself a perpetual protest against our natural tendency to desire when we have gone wrong to start afresh and do the wrong no more, and forget all about the matter. The truth is, on the contrary, that no wrong, as far as we can see, can ever be set right except at the cost of suffering. As a rule it may be laid down that if you desire to sweep away wrong into a corner and forget all about it, you have not so repented of it as to have got rid of it. The wrong may possibly be so far avoided that you will not perhaps fall into it again, or at any rate you will not be guilty of the same *form* of wrong again. But the evil principle is not therefore cast out, nor is the soul purified. The evil desire, the source of the fault, the poison within is not, as far as we can see, ever reached except by the penetrating medicine of pain. And so unquestionably all the nobler spirits would rather be punished for wrong doing than left unpunished. A man of keen conscience no doubt feels more keenly than other men how much punishment his faults deserve, and therefore he has the more reason to flinch away from that punishment, and to pray to God to spare him. But I believe that a true man, if

he could only be assured that pain would purify his soul, and that after he had undergone it he would really be set quite free from the evil infection; if he could only feel quite certain that the suffering would do its work upon him, and that his soul would be cleansed and hallowed, and his will elevated to true supremacy over himself, and his affections ennobled and made perfect, I believe that a true man would submit for such an object to any pain that can be conceived.

But I go on to observe that this absolute assurance cannot be given, because while it appears that pain is the great purifier of the soul, it is by no means the case that all kinds of pain will have this effect, or perhaps that any pain will have this effect by itself. The pain of punishment may after all be thrown away. 'There is a sorrow of the world,' says St. Paul to the Corinthians, 'which worketh death.' Repeated punishments may sometimes harden instead of purifying. It is one of the charges which the Prophets bring against the Jews, that though they had been punished so often they did not repent with a real repentance, but persevered still in their old sins. Pain does not always make a man better; sometimes it seems to make a man worse. It is the great ingredient in the medicine that is to heal; but it is not the only ingredient. What is wanted besides? What is it that makes the difference between the pain that heals and the pain that hardens; between the fire which burns away the baser metal and leaves the gold, and the fire that burns both but separates them not? It is no doubt love. The heart that really loves holiness,

and God the author of holiness, the heart that puts into the fire of pain the evil affections and lusts, and lets them be burnt away for the love of Him whom they have offended, is the heart that is purified by pain.

But this leads me yet a step further. For there is nothing that so kindles love in the suffering soul as the sympathy which shares, which sometimes more than shares, the suffering. If we sin and another tries to bear the pain of it; if we sin and another out of love tries to set the wrong right at the cost of much pain to himself; if we do wrong and that wrong bears evil fruit, and another out of love tries to lessen the evil to us by his labour, by his privations, by his endurance of consequences that otherwise would have fallen on our heads; then, if we have left in us a spark of true or generous feeling, it is impossible that we should not be touched at heart. The wrong that we do cannot be set right except at the cost of pain; and as far as our own souls are concerned, it cannot be set right except at the cost of pain endured by us. But there is other wrong besides that which concerns our own souls. When a man sins he stains himself; but he stains more than himself; he stains the world about him; his example, the influence of words that he has said, the spirit that breathes through his life, all this affects not himself only but all within his reach. And even if he be afterwards purified and freed, what shall wipe out that black record which is written against him in these consequences of his sin? To set this right may be quite out of his reach. It may require other

suffering, other labour than his own. If ever he be purified himself, what double love must he feel for another who has borne the needful pain that was required to cleanse this dark witness, and has set the purified soul free from the burden of an evil that it could never do away.

I do not say here, any more than I could say before, that we can work this out into precise detail; nor yet do I say that what we behold in this matter is the whole truth, and that this is the only sense in which it is possible for one living being to bear the punishment of another being's sin. But this, I say, is quite within our own perception. We can perceive that this pain which is the inevitable consequence of sin can be shifted from one to another; that, even as between ourselves, it is quite possible for one man to take on himself the consequences of another man's wrong-doing, and that this is above all others the kindness that provokes to love, and helps the man who is thus relieved to find a purifier and not a hardener in the pain that falls on himself.

For be it observed, lastly, that the wrong-doer in no case escapes pain altogether. Nay, I know not whether he does not feel still more acute pain when he is thus relieved than if he were left quite unaided. What pain could be more acute than to feel that you have brought on another a suffering which he would not otherwise have had? What pain could pierce more deeply than to know that your wrong-doing has cost severe suffering to set it right? The man who is thus relieved, very likely,

could not have done himself in any way whatever that which has been done for him, and he must not only accept the aid but acknowledge that without that aid he could never have got rid of his burden. But he sees that his burden has cost some one most fearful suffering, and it must pain him to see it. It must pain him to see it, and if so, if he is still to suffer, what has he gained? He has gained this, which in itself is quite an infinite gain, that his own pains which would have been the pains of despair have by this aid become the pains of hope, and that what he alone could not do he sees now may be done, namely, that the wrong may somehow be set right; and yet, again, those pains which would also have been the hardening pains of mere bearing what he could not escape, become the healing pains of the loving heart. The one who gives the aid may perhaps not diminish the pain in degree, but he changes it utterly in quality. And the suffering of love for the sin of another breathes a living and healing power into the suffering inflicted by divine decree on the soul that has sinned.

And so we rise to the conception of the pain which has redeemed us. That pain was needed to set the world right, and all our highest instincts, and all the tenor of human experience, and all the teaching of revelation, continue to say that without such suffering the wrong in the world could never have been set right. And still it is only by the power of that pain that the much evil in the world is so held in that at the last the good shall triumph. And it is only by the power of that pain that

all that fearful accumulation of wrong that each one of us stores against himself in the records of God's creation, is prevented from being an everlasting burden on our own souls. But more than that, it is the love which we read in that pain which reconciles the soul to God, and makes all pain that we have to bear a medicine for our sins by the spirit which it breathes into our hearts.

Are we then to have no pain? Has He so borne the pain that we have none to bear ourselves? Not so. If He was crucified, so does the Apostle teach must we be crucified. If He bare His cross, so, as He says Himself, must we too bear the cross. The true Christian feeling is assuredly this, to welcome any pain, any privation, that shall purify the soul and make us more like our Master. It is natural to shrink from pain altogether; but no Christian will allow himself to shrink from pain that comes as a punishment, unless he feels assured that that pain is not the way to Christ. No doubt the highest, the truest repentance is to repent like a child, with absolute resignation; leaving everything absolutely in God's hands; and neither seeking to suffer pain nor to avoid pain, but only to please God. But if the choice be between bearing the pain which punishes your sin and avoiding it, there can be no doubt which is the choice of the true soul. Not often, however, does God put such a choice before us; it is not often good for us to have to choose. The form which our pain takes is that of the never-ending conflict between duty and pleasure, and then it is made an imperative rule that the redemption of the

Cross redeems our souls by enabling us to crucify the love of our own pleasure, and to live for the heavenly end of pleasing the Master who bore so much on our behalf; and he who crucifies not himself, for him Christ was not crucified.

And yet one word more. It is precisely in this pain that man shall find the highest, the only enduring happiness. It is precisely here that you find the truth of the blessing pronounced on those who mourn.

October 27, 1867.

SERMON V.

REAL GRASP OF GREAT TRUTHS.

ST. MATTHEW xvi. 26.

'For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'

I DO not know anything more strange, in an undeniably strange nature, than the change which is made in us by the keenness or the dulness of our faith in fundamental truth. There are truths that we never dream of disputing, that nevertheless seem to have no hold upon our lives at all, till some accident, perhaps permanently, but more often only for a season, awakes us up. Thus, for instance, how little impression on our character is made by so unquestioned a doctrine as the omnipotence of God. It is not that we disbelieve it, or dispute it, or think it of no importance. Without any want of belief in it and its inevitable consequence, yet we simply forget it. And we do in God's sight what we would not do in man's sight. So, again, how little effect has it on our thoughts that we know that God searcheth our hearts. We are perfectly well aware that God knows the thoughts, and can see both what they are and why we indulge them, and what good or what harm is contained in them. And yet I suppose

there is no Christian who is not conscious that much of what passes through his mind he would rather that no one knew but himself. Nay, more than that. It may be in some degree excusable that a man should feel, 'I cannot be as perfect as I would, and do what I will I cannot always keep my thoughts in order; and though I know that God knows what I think and feel, that is simply inevitable, and I cannot escape it nor hide anything from Him. It is not that I would rather hide what I am thinking from Him than from men: it is that I can hide my evil thoughts from men, and therefore I do; I cannot hide them from God, and therefore I do not try.' This may be admitted. But yet it would seem to follow that if a man felt that concealment was simply impossible, he would still, at any rate, try to purify those thoughts which he could not conceal. But how weak are the efforts that we make to purify the thoughts, and how utterly incommensurate with our belief that God is ever seeing them and therefore judging them! Yet again, we believe that we shall die, and that after death will come in some form or other a sure judgment on our lives. Granted that the Judge will be the very source of all mercy; that He has put on human nature in order to make us feel that all our weakness shall have allowance made for it; that whatever can be rightly pleaded in extenuation of our faults, or in proof of our love and devotion, will be pleaded by the Judge Himself, since He ever liveth to make intercession for us. Grant all this, and yet is it not undeniable that the belief has marvellously little power over our

lives in proportion to the tremendous consequences that we see to be at stake? Here again we believe, we accept, we never dispute or dream of disputing; nay, if we put the question straight to ourselves, it would seem all unworthy of our rank as spiritual beings that our lives should *not* be judged; for if we are not to be judged, we lose responsibility and sink in the scale to mere living pieces of mechanism. We believe, but what effect does that belief work on us? And yet again to come to the very central doctrine of the Gospel, the Cross of Christ, we believe, we seem as it were not to believe only but to know, that our Lord did for us what only He could do, that in order to sow a divine seed in the hearts of men, in order to breathe into us the living power of His own Spirit, in order to make us feel that God had forgiven us, in order to be to us an eternal assurance of God's love to us, in order to enable us to say to our own consciences that whatever was needed, whether known to us or unknown, for our complete restoration to our Father's entire affection, that was and would be supplied to us; in order to do this He lived, as we read in the Gospels, and He died on the Cross, and gathered into Himself, as it were, the unhappiness of a whole world of sinners. We know this, and yet once more I say, how strangely dull and cold is the feeling in our own hearts in reply! If any man were now to bestow on us but the merest fraction of such devoted tenderness, how base we should think it not to be full of gratitude for life! We are grateful; but what sort of gratitude is it! Read one

chapter in the New Testament, and then put your own life by the side of it.

I might go on, for the subject is easy enough to illustrate. Let us look for a moment at the other side. For all this has another side.

All this is undeniable, but is it not to a great degree the very way in which we are made? We are so made that even the greatest truths have little effect unless there is something else to enforce them beside themselves. Let any one of us be brought suddenly, but quite consciously, to the very edge of death. Foolish thoughts, mere silliness, nonsense, fleeting fancies, trifles of the most irrelevant kind will recur even then. But the great truths which now we seem almost to forget, will assuredly at such a moment stand before us in true proportions. At such a moment we should not hesitate for an instant between the pleasant and the true; we should not dream of preferring the whole world to the will of God. At such a moment all false standards, false measures, would simply disappear. The wrong thought would seem of infinitely greater importance than the disappointment of some cherished wish. At this time, if you had the choice; if you could on the one hand be made all at once really good, God's own child; or on the other hand so clever, and so strong, and so skilful, and so graceful that you would win the admiration of all the world, you might perhaps be weak enough to make the wrong choice. But on the verge of death you not only could not choose so foolishly, but you could hardly imagine yourself capable of such

folly. And it is so always. Our faith lies as it were dormant within us. Some accident, we know not exactly what, wakes us up. And then and then only do we really feel the power of that belief which, though it has slumbered, yet has never really died in our hearts. So that it may be said with some truth that this forgetfulness of ours is but nature, and not wilful sin or weakness.

But yet further it may be said that God has so made us that it is necessary for our very duties that we should not have always before our minds the full power of these great truths. They are too much for our strength. They would overpower us and distort our lives if we could never escape their dominion for a moment. Nay, they have done this ere now. Men who allowed themselves to be simply overpowered by such thoughts as these, have quitted human duties and gone to live in deserts, and others have shut themselves up, and others have practised strange asceticisms, for which it would be hard to find good warrant. Nay, even in St. Paul's day, when he preached the speedy coming of our Lord to judgment, we see from the Epistles to the Thessalonians that there were some who were unable to walk steadily under the burden of so tremendous an expectation, and who therefore gave up the occupations of life as being altogether useless and out of place, and lived in a kind of idle terror, doing no work to maintain themselves, and hindering the quietness and orderliness of the Church. Upon them St. Paul laid a very sharp rebuke, and required the Church to

avoid such men as simply in the wrong. And this case is enough to prove that it is possible to pervert even the most important truths by allowing them to disturb the balance of our minds.

But when we have said all this, does not the answer still return upon us, Why, then, was the Gospel preached? Why were these truths revealed? Why are they not only revealed, but pressed upon us with most awful earnestness? They may be abused, no doubt. They are abused whenever they hinder us int ead of helping us in our duties. For that is the test of all truth; and we know that we are using a doctrine well or ill, accordingly as we find it help us or hinder us, in serving our fellows, in purifying our hearts, in coming near to God. And it is clear that any doctrine which hinders us rather than helps us in precisely these respects is being perverted. But it is inconceivable that such a perversion should be inevitable, or the Gospel would never have been preached at all. So, too, when we say that our forgetfulness is natural, we cannot deny that it is. But why was the Gospel given except for the very purpose of lifting us above our natural state? It is natural not to think of what is so awful without some effort; but are we therefore not to make the effort? It is natural to plunge into our occupations and pleasures and be absorbed in them; but are we then never to rise higher than such a level as this? Apostles preached and founded a Church, evangelists wrote, prophets uttered the will of God, all for the express purpose of lifting our nature up. The very meaning of religion is that

to a religious man those thoughts are habitual, which to another man come only on his death-bed; those doctrines are felt at all times, which in another man lie quite dormant till the soul is accidentally roused.

To awake to the knowledge of what is already believed; to feel the force of what you already do not doubt; to live by truths which you already admit without question—this is what most men need. There are no doubt cases where men need to be first convinced of the great truths themselves; there are men who cannot feel sure of the very fundamental doctrines, not of religion only, but even of morality. But far the most of us need something quite different, and that is to have real belief in what we do believe; to live by truths that we know; to have always present to us what we feel no inclination to doubt. We do not need for the most part to seek out the truths in difficult matters, but to have a keen sense of the simplest, the most elementary truths of all. If you could but live by what you already believe, if you could but hold absolutely fast to that truth which you have already accepted, if you could but square your life to the very spirit of the rule that you have no doubt about, it would do more for you, it would bring you nearer to God, it would make you better understand our Lord, than any solution of doubts and difficulties, than any acquaintance with higher doctrines, than any depth of religious insight. I do not question for a moment the power of the deeper mysteries of the faith over those who have attained to them; but even

they cannot do for you what is meant to be done by the simplest and most commonplace truths, if only you will make these truths not a part of your creed, but a part of your life. For in knowing truth you see God as it were afar off; but in so far as you can live by truth, you are joined to God Himself. It is by repeatedly bringing our lives to the touchstone of such truths as I have been speaking of, by reminding ourselves of what we already believe, by repelling temptations with thoughts like these, by calling back to mind God and Christ and the Cross of Christ, that the soul of man grows at last, he knows not how, to a nearer sense of communion with the Father of spirits, to a firmer hold of the spiritual world, to a deeper knowledge of the fathomless love of Christ, until he feels that God has laid hold upon him; and to him that feels that the preacher can teach little more.

November 17, 1867

SERMON VI.

UNPUNISHED SIN.

ST. LUKE xiii. 1–3.

'*There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*'

THERE can be no doubt that we find a snare besetting our lives in the visible fact that sin is by no means always punished. We see in our own case, we see in the case of many others, that wrong may and does very often prosper. Sin is often concealed, and permanently concealed. Sin, which was done for the sake of getting some pleasure or advantage, often fails, but it also often succeeds. Sin, which is punished, and perhaps punished severely, in one man, is quite unpunished in another. This is a snare to us: it is a snare to us in two ways. It offends our sense of justice, and men have sometimes refused to believe it. And their refusal to believe it has led them to all sorts of unwarranted theories to make the facts of life square with their expectation of what ought to be. So in past times, and to some degree even in

present times, men have been inclined to maintain that heavy afflictions are a sure proof of secret wickedness. Job's friends would not allow that he could have suffered more than other men unless he had sinned more than other men. And those who told our Lord of the murder of the Galileans seem from our Lord's words to have implied that these Galileans must have been more than ordinary sinners. And still at all times men are inclined to fancy that sufferings are judgments, and that we cannot reconcile it with the justice of God that men should be required to bear more than others unless they were more wicked than others. Against this our Lord here sets His face. Sufferings are not always judgments. We are not to suppose that those who are most afflicted are most sinful. Nay, Who was it that bore the heaviest of all afflictions? Was it not the very sinless One Himself? But this same puzzle is a snare to us in quite a different way, about which our Lord immediately afterwards tells a parable, and about which I have now something more to say. The one snare is a temptation to believe in spite of our own eyes and conscience, that men who suffer are especially sinful, that suffering proves sin; the other is the temptation to believe that those who do not suffer are not sinful, that the absence of punishment proves the absence of sin.

Now this snare is about us perpetually, and even good men are sometimes caught by it, and all of us are liable to be caught. We do wrong. It is not known, or if known it is not noticed; or if noticed, its true character is not seen, and so we go quite unpunished. The lie is

never found out. The selfishness gets its own way, and perhaps does not even bring visible dislike. The disobedience is unobserved. The idleness is not treated sharply. The secret sin is often committed without detection. And what is the effect on ourselves? There is, first, the belief that wrong is by no means certain to bring evil consequences, and that in all probability if we do wrong we shall not suffer. But there is, secondly, what is far worse, the blunting of the conscience. What is done with such complete impunity does not seem so wrong as it did. If it be concealed, and we consequently have not the sight of other men's faces to wake us up, we are still more liable to think less of it than we did. If it be unconcealed, we may perhaps be kept from such a thought, provided, and only provided, we see it condemned by others. But if it be open to many of our companions and *they* do not blame it, the blunting of the conscience is marvellously rapid. You think a thing wrong. But you do it; and those around you notice it, and yet do not blame it; and it is never punished either by Providence as far as you can tell, nor by any human authority. How rapidly it follows that you think it wrong no longer! It is natural to follow a multitude to do evil. But it is tenfold more natural to do so if you find that the evil is usually unpunished.

This is a snare to us. Just observe how different our life would be if the rule were different. Let us suppose that every wrong act invariably and speedily and visibly brought down a proportionate punishment. Let us suppose that no falsehood was ever undetected, no idleness

ever screened, no selfishness ever passed over, no ill temper ever escaped sharp punishment, should we not very soon be wonderfully different from what we are? Dropping down to the lowest level, what an enormous difference there would be in all human society! How many thefts would there be ten years hence if during the next ten years every single theft was invariably detected, and openly and speedily and sharply punished? Theft would be almost eradicated. And what is true of theft would certainly be true of most other crimes. The air which crime breathes is undoubtedly the uncertainty of punishment. Probably no regular thief escapes all through his life; but probably also he escapes far oftener than he is caught. And this uncertainty encourages him in his criminal life. If he knew absolutely for certain that every theft that he committed would be punished within an hour after he had committed it, he would steal no more. But he knows, on the contrary, that the chances are all the other way, and so he steals. And what is true of theft is true of sins of every kind. I suppose there are very few of our faults which we should not keep out of if there were a certainty that detection and punishment would follow in a few hours.

Why is this? Why if it is plain that men would keep out of evil provided only that evil was punished as fast as it was committed, why has not God made the world accordingly? Why has He left this snare in our path? It is obvious that the answer runs into the wider question, Why are there temptations in the world? Why are we made with inclinations so often at variance with duty?

Why are not our consciences possessed of more absolute power over us? Why are our consciences only able to warn and not to compel? We cannot answer these questions fully; but we can answer them sufficiently to guide our own steps.

For it is plain enough that if all sin were punished as fast as it was committed, the one motive for keeping out of sin would be the fear of punishment. No other would ever have room to spring up. We should do right, not for love of right, not for loyalty to God, not for longing to please our Redeemer, but simply because we could not help ourselves. In most cases the very inclination to do wrong would be crushed; but with it would be crushed all freedom of will, all spontaneousness of action. Love is shown by fighting battles with inclination; but we should have no such battles to fight. Love grows by self-sacrifice; but self-sacrifice is impossible, if you do just the same without it as with it. Obedience to conscience is tested by what you will do, when you can obey or disobey as you please. But if punishment for wrong were absolutely certain, choice would generally be impossible.

It is for this reason that so much of sin is left unpunished in this world. It is for the same reason that the other world is so absolutely hidden from our sight, and we see not how God redresses the balance of justice. We believe, indeed, that sooner or later, in the other world if not in this, every sin shall meet with its fitting treatment. But all this is hid away from our eyes. It is apprehended by faith, not by sight. We

may disbelieve it altogether if we will. It is so far off, so hidden, so removed from all experience, that it cannot overpower our inclinations; and we have to fight the battle of good against evil exactly as if there were no such punishment in the other world at all.

The plain fact is that God would have from us the service of freedom, the service of love, the service of children to a father; not the service of bondage, the service of fear, the service of slaves to a master. As far, therefore, as it is possible to do so without making human society impossible, the check of infallible punishment for sin is removed. There is enough left to prevent human intercourse from being destroyed. There is enough left just to keep the machinery of society at work. But God wills that we should be His, not by fear or compulsion, but by love and choice.

See, then, how a Christian will look on punishment on one side, and on the frequent absence of punishment on the other.

He will look on punishment as the ordained aid to his own weakness. If all sin were speedily and invariably punished, a great deal of it would certainly cease. But short of that, even what punishment there is in the world is undeniably a great help to us. There are times when the sight of the punishment which has befallen others, still more often, perhaps, when the memory of the punishment which has befallen himself, just keeps a Christian from falling at a critical moment. These are cases in which a sharp punishment has killed the evil inclination, or at any rate has so beaten

it down that victory over it is afterwards sure. In all cases the Christian will learn to look on punishment, not as a proof that God has cast him off, but that God feels a father's anger, and checks him as a father would check a son.

And on the other hand, when the Christian thinks of the many sins that he has done for which he has never been punished at all, he will see through them all the proof that Christ is seeking to win him, not by compulsion, but by his own free choice. The sin is not punished that you may forsake it freely. The sin is passed over again and yet again that your repentance may be yours, and not the mere consequence of alarm or pain. God implores you to return, and will have it your own act. If punishment will help you to come to Him freely, He sends you punishment; but if not, you shall be sought, and yet again you shall be sought, and your sin shall be left untouched, that your coming may be entirely yours. You may pervert this to your own hurt. Because you are not punished, you may therefore refuse to forsake sin, and you may acknowledge no check except that of punishment. Or again, because you are not punished you may let your conscience sink down into acquiescence with evil, and think there can be no great harm in what is so left unchecked. You may do this; for your very condition as a free spiritual being makes you capable of the worst wrong as well as of the highest good. But surely a noble nature would find in the very fact that punishment in this world is so frequently not inflicted, a fresh spur to live a conscientious life. You are left

in many ways free; free from the certainty, free sometimes even from the chance of punishment. What does that mean but that your service may be, if you choose, all the more your own, all the more surely genuine, all the more entirely the offering of your heart? And so as the New Testament abounds in love, in tenderness, in calls to Christ's service, in exhortations, in appeals to our nobler nature, and its threats and its warnings are ever subordinate, and reserved for downright necessity, so, too, in our experience of life we shall find that punishment of evil may play a like part in bringing us to Christ, but that the voice which summons us most often, most earnestly, most persistently, is one that speaks not of punishment, but of loyalty and generous love; one that appeals not to your fear, but to your love of what is excellent; one that calls on you as a free spiritual nature to live in accordance with the highest impulses of that nature, and though unpunished for wrong, still to do resolutely what is right.

November 24, 1867

SERMON VII.

SELF-JUDGMENT.

1 JOHN iii. 7.

'Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.'

ADVENT Sunday is come round again to put us in mind of the coming of our Lord, and of the final test by which our lives shall one day be tried, and that test is, whether our lives have been good or evil, whether our characters as issuing from our lives have ended right or have ended wrong. On this matter there is room for self-deception. In more than one passage we find the Apostles warning us that just here, where one might perhaps have thought that no mistake was possible, we are to be on our guard against a very fatal mistake. 'Let no man deceive you,' says St. John here; and then goes on to tell us what it might seem no Christian need be told, namely, that righteousness consists in living righteously. So again, 'Let no man deceive you with vain words,' St. Paul says to the Ephesians; and then goes on to say, that it is because of plain sins, which he mentions, that the wrath of God cometh on the

children of disobedience. 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked,' says St. Paul to the Galatians; and then goes on with the elementary truth of religion, 'What a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' 'Be not deceived,' the same Apostle says to the Corinthians; and then goes on to tell us, that men who commit very grievous sins, which he enumerates, 'shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.' It is clear, that though the matter be so plain in words, yet there must be some serious danger of mistake in fact. Let us examine what the danger is.

First, then, there is the danger pointed out in the form of several of these warnings, the danger that we shall be misled by one another. 'Let no man deceive you;' implying that men will be likely to do and to say what would deceive you, whether purposely or unintentionally, and that you will be liable to be deceived by it. And this danger is seen at once to be real and great. There is a very real danger that we shall think things wrong to be harmless, and in some extreme cases to be even right, because men about us call them so. 'Everybody does it' is a constant plea to excuse what is wrong. 'Nobody thinks anything of it' is the same sort of plea in a different shape. But 'everybody does it,' 'nobody thinks anything of it,' will not make a wrong thing right. Wrong things remain wrong, however many people may do them or condone them. The opinion of others may be a part, and in some few cases a very large part, of the rule by which you are to decide between right and wrong: but not by any means the final rule,

and in many cases a very small part of the rule. What the opinion of your fellows condemns is pretty sure to be wrong; but in very few instances can it be said that what the opinion of your fellows permits is pretty sure to be permissible. Let not the edge of the standard by which you are to be guided in life be blunted by the permission which society may give to this or to that. It is not he that doeth what men think to be righteous, but he that doeth what is righteous, whom God judgeth to be righteous.

Yet again, we are not deceived by others. We deceive ourselves. And one way in which we deceive ourselves is by measuring evil deeds by their consequences. No harm has come of it. It has done no harm to anybody. It has not been punished. So, perhaps, it is not very evil. If no harm has come of an evil thing, thank God that you have not the double unhappiness of having done the evil and of having produced mischief by doing it. If you have not been punished for doing wrong, put it to yourself that this is a call to you to repent freely, and not under the compulsion of punishment. But do not be so mad as to let your judgment be decided by such reasons as these. There are secret sins which produce no immediate harm that you can see, and yet are most deadly to the soul that falls into them. A lie told from fear may often have no mischievous consequences, may escape detection and consequently punishment, and yet who will dare to call it a slight thing? Yet that is one danger, a most real danger, that our consciences

shall be permanently blinded by our allowing ourselves to slip into the notion that the consequences are to decide what is good and what is bad. How is it that we can be so deceived? Not because we distinctly argue to ourselves that evil is not evil when nothing comes from it, but because we allow our minds to become careless about it, and so our consciences fall asleep.

Yet again, we deceive ourselves in another way, namely, by seeking for all manner of excuses and palliations. The strength of the temptation, or the suddenness of it, or the length of it; our own weakness, our natural tendency to that particular sort of sin; our wishes to be better, the excellence of our feelings, the excellence of our desires; the peculiarity of our circumstances, the special disadvantages which make us worse off than others; all these we put before our minds as excuses for having done wrong, and persuade ourselves too often that wrong is not really wrong, and that though the deed was sinful the doer of it was not. I do not mean that these palliations are never worth anything, nor do I mean that in every case the same deed is the same sin. There are no doubt infinite varieties of guilt in what appears outwardly the same deed, and God will distinguish between them and will judge justly. But the habit of mind which leads us to palliate our sins and find good excuses for them, has this dangerous tendency, that it blinds us to the evil of evil. We slip into the delusion of believing that we are better than we seem, that our faults look worse than they are, that inside we have good dispositions, and good desires, and

warm feelings, and religious emotions, and that it is only the outside that is marked by those evil stains. This *is* a delusion, and a grievous delusion. You cannot *be* good and *do* wrong. You cannot *be* righteous and *do* unrighteousness. Granted that you may slip once into a sin which notwithstanding is not really a part of your nature. Still, this cannot happen several times over. Make no mistake. If you *do* wrong the deed is a real part of your life, and cannot be removed out of it by any fancy of yours that it is on your circumstances, your temptations, your peculiar disadvantages that the blame can be cast, still less by any wishes or emotions or feelings even of the most religious kind.

Lastly, there is another very common form of this self-deception—the belief, namely, that if your life is right on the whole, this particular thing or that particular thing which you know to be wrong will be compensated by the many other things that you do that are right No such bargaining with evil can be allowed. A little sin, if distinctly permitted in disobedience to conscience, becomes a great sin at once. God will permit no wilful sin, not even the smallest. God no doubt measures us by a merciful rule, and He can tell what we cannot tell, how much allowance must be made for weakness, and what He will forgive because we strove hard and yet in some measure failed. But if we do not strive at all, if we simply do wrong with the idea that the wrong is a trifle, we can expect no allowance from the Judge. How could we? for the aim of all His dealings with us is to lift us up to

Himself, and how can He lift us up if we make a bargain with evil? Moreover, it is almost always the case that the sin which we thus want to have condoned either is a far more evil thing than we think it, or contains the germ of evil enough to ruin us.

Now, the guidance of our future life depends to a very great degree on our own judgment of our past life. We look to the past to learn our own temptations, our own weaknesses. 'Examine yourselves;' 'prove your own selves,' is St. Paul's advice to those who had gone wrong, and whom he was endeavouring to set right. And we too, at this season of preparation for our Lord's return, must judge ourselves if we wish to prepare ourselves rightly. And the rules of judgment are plain enough if we will but beware of those deceptions which are likely to mislead us in applying these plain rules.

Look at your life, and try to judge it, as your conscience tells you God will judge it afar. Do not judge it by what you hear from your friends; do not judge it by the punishments that you have brought upon yourself of whatever kind; do not seek to palliate or excuse what is wrong in it; do not seek to throw the blame of it on anything but yourself. Take this for your principle —that for what is evil in it you are responsible, and nothing can shift that responsibility upon any other person or upon any other thing. Put yourself before the judgment-seat of Christ. Remember that even your inmost thoughts are known to the Judge. And then decide how far your life is that of one who calls himself Christ's disciple.

It is true that we cannot now judge ourselves with the same tremendous issues depending on the judgment as we are taught to expect will depend on the judgment of our Master when He comes. We are now to judge ourselves in order, not that we may receive the final sentence on our lives, but that we may find an aid towards serving our Lord better than before. But the judgment will be the same whatever the issues that are to follow. Wrong will not become right, nor good evil, because the decision between them involves dreadful consequences. Right judgment is always the same whatever comes of it. And if we would prepare for the final judgment, and win our approval then, our best aid is to judge ourselves rightly now. If, as I have been describing to you, we are always liable to self-deception about the very plainest truths, about the very simplest rules; if we are liable to be blinded, to be blunted, to fall asleep; such times as the present come round expressly to rouse us, to awake our consciences, to purify our judgments, to elevate our standards, to make our rules of life more true, to free us from dangerous deceits. For such purposes let us use them.

December 1, 1867.

SERMON VIII.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

1 JOHN iv. 19.

'We love Him, because He first loved us.'

OUR Lord has told us that the first and great commandment of the Law is that 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' This is the great commandment, because all others flow from it, and the power to obey all others is found in it. A religious or even a moral life which has not the love of God at the bottom will inevitably end in one of two ways: either at last it will wither up and become mechanical; or else it will compel a man to feel his need of something deeper, and will thus bring him to seek that love of God without which his spiritual life cannot go on. In one way or another no doubt we may go on long without a distinct perception of the want. We may go on serving God as slaves would serve a taskmaster, doing what we are bid, and watching our steps lest we stray into forbidden paths. But the heart is never fully satisfied with this kind of life, and we are sure

to find it out sooner or later. While trials are quite within our strength we may meet them with no other armour than the resolute determination to do right. But times come to every Christian when such resolution, however fixed, is not enough, times when we need the power of a supernatural presence; times come when nothing can enable us to bear our burden but the sense that we have a more than earthly love to comfort us; times come when temptations are so alluring that nothing but affection can keep us straight, and if we have not the power to say, 'I will not do this because God who loves me will be grieved if I do,' a fall is inevitable. There are men, no doubt, who are comparatively slow to feel this. There are men who have a much keener sense of right than they have of love: men who more naturally obey a law than love a person, though that person be Divine: men who have a delight in doing right because it is right, and not because it is the will of God. It is possible that such men may long continue their steady service without any sense of anything lacking. But it will not be so always. Assuredly even in them at last will rise up a deep and abiding sense of God's holiness and goodness, and they will feel powerfully drawn towards Him who is the very Law of Holiness in His own person; and they too, at last, will learn, partly by their failures, but partly, too, by their steady obedience, that there is no spiritual power in the human soul equal to the love of God.

And as this is invariably the true end of all service of God, so also it is the best beginning. It is not always

the beginning. There are, as I have been saying, some who begin with obedience and rise to love afterwards. But even they would be better, happier, more blessed, if they had attained sooner to that central strength, the source of all the highest life, the conscious love of God. Many falls would it save even the very best from making; many temptations would it break and dissipate; many perplexities would it clear up. But above all it would give them a rest and satisfaction in their service which nothing else can give. To serve coldly and unwillingly is hardly to serve at all. But to serve heartily, cheerfully, zealously, is yet sometimes very far short of the happiest service. The happiest service is his who has learnt that God loves him even as his mother loves him, who longs to please God as *the* thing above everything else that he would desire, who cares more to feel as if God were satisfied with him than to have any other thing on earth. The happiest and best service is his who carries in his heart a perpetual thought that God knows everything about him and that it is his delight that God should know it; it is his who turns to God whenever he feels the slightest difficulty, or perplexity, or trouble; it is his who has learnt not only to obey but to love.

The words of St. John with which I began tell us how men can learn to love God. They learn to love God by learning that God loves them. If we would begin by loving God, if we would secure ourselves in our obedience to His laws, if we would attain to the rest and the calm strength which only love can supply, if we would give Him not our life only but our hearts, we must assure

ourselves of His love for us. Obey Him and you will certainly end with loving Him; but far better to begin with loving Him and make your obedience happy from the first; and the way to do that is to press upon your soul the certain truth that He loves you. No one is too old to learn the lesson if he has not already learnt it; no one is too young. No one can find a better way. No one can seek a better prize. In some sense, indeed, you must love Him, or you cannot serve Him at all. In any service of Him, if it be but honest, true service, there is of necessity wrapped up a love of God. But I am urging you to seek for more than this latent, unconscious love. Seek to love Him with knowledge; seek to know that you love Him: seek to make Him consciously the aim of your actions and the umpire of your thoughts; seek to make pleasing Him your chief hope; seek to take Him for your King, your Master, your Father, your Redeemer. Seek this; and the way to seek it is to fix in your mind the assurance that He loves you with a deep and warm and enduring affection.

There are two things which prevent us from feeling sure that God loves us; one is ignorance, the other is sin.

Ignorance is no more than the imperfection of our nature, and in itself is never blameable. Those who know nothing of God cannot know how much He loves them. And those who have heard of God yet cannot of course have so keen a sense of the certainty, and depth, and power of God's love if they have not yet experienced any proofs of it. And we cannot blame men if in this respect

they differ much. Some will very early have some experience of that love, and will consequently have a proof of it within themselves which they cannot communicate to others. Some will again accept it as a truth because they are told of it; but with them it rests on outer testimony only, and they have not yet any inward assurance of it. Some again find it very hard to believe such a thing in any strong and real sense simply because other men have told them. But to all alike two things may be said. One is this: If you wish to have an assurance that God loves, listen to the witness of His saints. Read the lives of good men, and see how with one voice they express this above everything else, that God's love is the surest stay of strength, and the only certain spring of spiritual life, and the never-failing light in darkness, and the unsleeping watcher against evil, and the only comfort which heals unhappiness, and the only soother of the restless conscience, and the only hope of future peace, and the only defence against temptations. Listen to what good men say of themselves, and you will hear them say that often have they failed God, but never has God failed them; that they have tried and know for certain that nothing quenches God's love; that they have leant upon it, and have always found that through all seeming difficulties God's love has borne every weight that could be put upon it. Listen to the accounts that they give of their own trials, of their own journey through life, of their growth, of their experience, of their defeats, of their victory. And they will tell you that as time went on they only felt more and more assured that God's love might be trusted to the

uttermost, yes, and beyond the uttermost; and that even when they utterly despaired of themselves God's love had not despaired nor left them to fall away. Read such lives, and you will see that many lessons may be learnt; from one lessons of heroism; from another lessons of perseverance; from another lessons of unwearied patience and cheerfulness; from another lessons of humility; from another lessons of marvellous purity; but one lesson they all unite in teaching, one truth seems to burn within them till it cannot be repressed, one word they have to say to all who will hear, and it bursts from their lips almost without their will, and that is the certainty that God's love is over all His children, and that man can never rely on it in vain. This is the witness of all men who have ever known God. And yet there is another. And that you can find for yourself, and find it speedily, and the way to find it is simply to try. Live in the belief that God loves you. Follow His saints, and since they assure you that God loves, try for yourself whether their words be true. Come to God as you would to one of whose love you had received strong proofs. Come to Him when you find duty difficult or perplexing. Come to Him when you have much to bear. Come to Him when you are troubled or distressed. Ask for His aid, for His sympathy, His comfort; and most certainly you will speedily have a proof that He loves you, such a proof as you will not soon forget.

But the other hindrance to a belief in God's love is much harder to deal with, that is, the consciousness of sin, perhaps of unrepented sin. To know that you have sinned,

to know perhaps that though you have fought against it, are fighting against it, will fight against it, yet the victory is not yet yours, to say to yourself in the midst of the battle 'I am not fighting a true fight,' and yet to feel sure that God loves you all the while, to know that He is watching you, that He is secretly aiding you, aiding you as much as ever is good for you, to know that if you will but keep up the fight you are certain to win,—this indeed is difficult. A cloud seems to cover the sky and shut out the sunlight. A thick veil seems to make it impossible that your voice should reach His ears. You seem to yourself not to desire His love, since His love will not give you something else on which you have set your heart. Or perhaps you are cold and turn away from the very thought of God's love. Or perhaps you bury the reproofs of conscience in occupation, or in amusement. Or perhaps you harden yourself in a determination to take your own way. Anyhow, while you are conscious that you are in the wrong, you cannot believe that God's love has never failed you, and that He is waiting with loving eyes for the moment when He can draw you to Himself again. And yet what proof could be given of His love even for unrepenting sinners, other than that which He gave when His Son died upon the Cross? He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Even while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. He died to prove the love of God, not for the good, not for the obedient, not for the tender-hearted, not for the conscientious, but for sinners who as yet knew nothing of His love, and had not begun to repent. You cannot be sure that God loves

you, because you know that you have not repented. Come, then, to God, and ask Him to aid you to repent. You are conscious of wrong in your life. Come to God, wrong and all, and ask Him to help you in getting rid of the wrong. 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief,' was once the prayer of one who was told that faith was needed, and his prayer was immediately answered. 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief,' is still the prayer which rises in the heart of many a Christian who ought long ago to have learnt the lesson that God's love far outruns men's petition for it. If you have done ever so wrong be sure that God loves you still, in spite of it all. Try to love Him in return. It may be that sin which has resisted every other force shall be melted down and disappear when you begin to love. It may be that your victory has been refused just in order to bring you to Him, who alone can give you the true armour for fighting a spiritual battle. But be that as it may, of this at least you may be sure, for our Lord's whole life proclaims it and His death is the seal of it, that sin may keep you from loving God, but it cannot keep God from loving you. And if you will but think of that, you cannot fail at last to love Him.

February 16, 1868.

SERMON IX.

AMENDMENT THE TEST OF REPENTANCE.

JEREMIAH XXXIV. 10, 11.

'*Now when all the princes, and all the people, which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his manservant, and every one his maidservant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more, then they obeyed, and let them go. But afterward they turned, and caused the servants and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids.*'

THE striking incident to which these words refer is not so well known to readers of the Bible as might otherwise have been expected, simply because no mention is made of it in the historical Books. The story is this. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and the city was reduced to the greatest straits. In their extremity, the people had recourse to what we read of as being done on many other occasions in ancient days; they set free their slaves. This was done in the most solemn manner at a great public ceremonial,

with sacrifices to God, distinctly calling on Him to witness the deed. A calf was offered up and divided into two parts, and the nobility and the people, with the newly-enfranchised slaves, marched in solemn procession between the parts, just as in the Book of Genesis it is recorded that when God made a covenant with Abraham, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the pieces of Abraham's offering. In fact, nothing could have been more solemn, nothing ought to have been more binding, than such a covenant as this. Presently after, a change seemed to come over the fortunes of the war. The great rival to the power of the Eastern monarchy always had been Egypt. The country of the Jews was but the battle-field between the two competitors for the empire of the then known world. The Egyptians could not permit Jerusalem to be occupied by the Babylonians without an effort to save it. The Egyptian king brought up all his forces, and Nebuchadnezzar was compelled to quit the siege in order to deal with this much more dangerous opponent. Then was there, naturally enough, great joy in Jerusalem. Then one might, perhaps, have expected the people thus delivered to feel that God had shown them this mercy because they had shown mercy to their slaves. Not so. The first act of princes and of people was to re-enslave those whom they had just before set free. No thankfulness for their own deliverance, no sense of honour binding them to so solemn a promise, no fear of God, whom they had invoked to witness the covenant, no shame for such an open disregard of

what men hold disgraceful, weighed with them against their own comfort and their liking for their own evil ways. They looked on the covenant as a thing into which they had been frightened, and now that the fright was over they unscrupulously set it aside. The slavery was illegal to begin with. By their own law, as the Prophet points out, the slaves had a right to their freedom independently of any covenant whatever. But that, of course, was a consideration that could not be expected to have any weight. If they would not care for their own solemn promise, why should they care for an old law which probably for centuries, certainly for some considerable time, had been habitually broken?

Now we have here no more than the picture of a wicked and unscrupulous people. But let us add to that the other side of the picture. Not very many years before, Jeremiah had been ordered to warn them of God's coming judgment, and the warning had particularly referred to what was one of the national sins, the gross and habitual disregard of justice, and the grinding oppression of the poor. They were told that God would forgive them if they thoroughly executed judgment between a man and his neighbour; if they oppressed not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood; if they did not walk after other gods to their own hurt. Injustice, oppression, and idol worship are the three specified sins, and of these three injustice and oppression are put first. But they were told, that if they persisted in

such sins, it was useless to come to Jerusalem and say, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.' In spite of the Temple being dedicated to God Himself, the whole town should be delivered to destroyers, and one day Jerusalem should be as completely wiped out of existence as Shiloh already had been. But this prophecy almost brought Jeremiah to the stake. The people who persisted in this wicked life yet accused Jeremiah of blasphemy for having dared to say such wicked things of a place consecrated to Jehovah, and he barely escaped suffering under the same charge as that which, six hundred years afterwards, was the occasion that our Lord was crucified and St. Stephen was stoned.

Now, perhaps, one might be inclined to say this was unblushing hypocrisy. They were living wicked lives, and yet pretending to care about the place that was dedicated to God's service, pretending to feel a sort of horror at the very idea of a word being said against so holy a place. But there is no trace of what we commonly call hypocrisy. From all that we read, it rather seems that they did really feel a good deal of sorrow, of a sort, because of their sins. They came to God's service and lamented their own evil-doings, but they lamented them with a kind of despair, and used various expressions, implying that they considered this prevailing wickedness as a sort of fate—an inevitable destiny. Sometimes they said, the Prophet tells us, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;' meaning that the evil was inherited from

former generations, and therefore, in a sense, incurable. Sometimes they openly spoke of the national sin as somehow imposed upon them against their will. They came and stood before the Lord in His very house and presence, as it were, and said, 'We are delivered to do these abominations;' in fact, almost using the words which St. Paul afterwards used in so very different a meaning—'When I would do good, evil is present with me.' Such men, you may be sure, had a very real sorrow for their own evil deeds. Aristotle truly remarks in one place, that bad men are full of repentance; and of this sort of repentance the Jews of that day were full. I have little doubt that many of those who wanted to put Jeremiah to death for daring to say such a blasphemous thing, as that Jerusalem should be treated as Shiloh had been treated, thought within themselves that, wicked or not at other times, in this, at any rate, they were right; that such words were a horrible blasphemy, and ought to be punished. So, too, I should think, that when the people solemnly set free their slaves, not a few felt that they had done a good deed, that now, at any rate, their repentance was genuine, and that God would accept it. What it was all worth was plainly shown a few months after, when the first act of joy at deliverance was to break their pledge and return to their sin.

This happened just when the Jews were at their worst. The nation was thoroughly corrupt. Every attempt at reform had only been the precursor of a

deeper fall. Josiah's great reformation was seen to be a failure the moment he himself was dead, and his early death was seen to be a mercy, for he was taken away from the evil to come. Jeremiah's early prophecies are full of warnings and of calls to repentance, and he implies, and sometimes expressly says, that the judgment would not fall if the warnings were listened to. But as time went on his tone changed, and in all his later prophecies he speaks of the judgment as certain and inevitable, and he exhorts his people, not to avert the evil by repentance, but to show repentance by submission. He does not by any means give up the language of hope, but his hopes are for the distant future, and he seems to take it for granted that at that time nothing whatever could prevent the Captivity. The fact was that the people, as a whole, were past the possibility of being healed by repentance alone: punishment had become positively necessary, and repentance might soften it, might make it more efficient, might make it shorter, might make the return to God's favour more complete, but nothing could, because nothing ought to, avert it. It may well be said that what people do at such times cannot contain lessons for ordinary Christians; that, in fact, there must be very few either in such a state, or near such a state, and that though this must have a deep interest for us, it cannot contain much instruction.

But this is not so. You see here in the doings of such men the results of tendencies in which we all share. You may be very far indeed from being like the Jews

at their worst, and yet you will find it worth while to study what they were at their worst. The dark picture brings into clearer light much that you also have to guard against, much that in fainter lines you will find traced in your own character. Great evils have lessons for those who have not yet even approached them. And now, at the beginning of Lent, when we are called to look at the faulty side of our characters, and to repent of our many sins, it is worth while to see what faults may become at last, and to guard lest, perchance, we may find that sins which we think very shocking in the corrupted Jewish nation, have their counterpart in our own lives.

The truth which I would have you especially gather from the conduct of the Jews is this: that excellent as repentance may be in itself, and quite independent of all results, yet the one ultimate test of it is amendment—amendment, and nothing else. We have done wrong and are sorry for it. What is the test of the value of our sorrow? Our doing the same thing no more. We desire to be forgiven. We pray to God for that forgiveness. What is to us the certain seal that He has heard our prayer, and by the power of His Son's cross has finally forgiven us? The seal is that we have been enabled to sin so no more. Put it how you will, you must always come back to that. I do not say that no repentance is worth anything which is followed by further falls. God forbid. I do not say that God never forgives until He also makes the sin impossible. God forbid. But I do say that to *us*—to *us* there is no other

proof either of the genuineness of our repentance, or of the certainty of God's forgiveness.

Do we never feel something of the contrary feeling? Do we never say anything at all like 'We are delivered to do these abominations'? Are we never tempted to say, 'I know this to be wrong, but it is my nature, and I really cannot help it'? Are we never disposed to sit down contented with our own faults and call them our nature? Do we never repent in moments of excitement, and then, when the excitement is gone, go back to the old sins, and think very little of them? This is what the Jews did. This is the snare which caught them. They repented, and did not amend. They repented, but called their sins inevitable. They repented while they were hot, and sinned again when the heat was over.

It is very often very hard to conquer faults. Very often it requires much perseverance, and much determination. But no Christian has ever the right to say that he has a fault which he cannot conquer. The express purpose of our Lord's life and death was to give us the power to conquer, and it is quite certain that we can conquer if we will. Sorrow for sin is good just in proportion as it leads to amendment. Repentance is real just in proportion as it ends in amendment. The love of God has done its work in us just in proportion as it has enabled us to amend our lives. Is it needless to say all this? Let any one look keenly into his life, and he will soon see whether or not it is needless. It is, indeed, most necessary. And now, in Lent, when

we are to think of ordinary commonplace faults; when we are to test ourselves by simple every-day duties; when we are to be more than usually real, sober, careful; we need to see whether, Christian though we be, we are not falling into mistakes the same in principle as those which were made by very wicked men.

March 1, 1868.

SERMON X.

THE BURNING LAMP.

ST. MATTHEW xxv. 8.

'And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.'

THERE can be little doubt that in the three parables with which our Lord closes the series, He intended to give a picture of the Judgment of the Last Day, and that each parable represents a different part or a different aspect of that judgment. The wise and foolish virgins represent the sentence to be passed on the secret lives which go on in the depths of the hearts of Christians, and of course also on those especially who from whatever reason have none but secret lives whereby they can be judged. The trading servants show us how Christ will look at our visible active service, and therefore at those especially whose duties have demanded such service from them. The sheep and goats are the division of the heathen who, not having heard of Christ and His Gospel, must be judged by that primeval revelation written in the hearts of all men, the duty of human love and kindness; and the rule of their judgment necessarily applies to us also in as far as no higher rule absorbs it. Each one of

the parables is a lesson for every Christian, for every Christian will assuredly find that in some respect he falls under each head. One may fit him better, possibly, than either of the others. But each has its application to him, and by each he must try himself.

The parable of the Virgins, I said, applies especially to the secret life of the heart. All the virgins, as far as we are told, were alike to outward appearance. It is implied that all had their lamps burning till the time came for slumber; for when they awake the foolish say, 'Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.' Plainly if this were the first time that the extinction of their lamps was noticed, they must have been previously burning. The lamps were burning till the time came for slumber. This slumber comes on all, and not a word is said to blame it. Had it been blameable some notice of it would have been taken at the judgment; or at any rate some sharpness would have been used in awakening the slumberers. It seems, then, that the slumber must mean that which all have to undergo, the slumber of death. All the virgins keep their lamps burning till they drop into that slumber. And then comes the voice of the Son of God, the summons of the trumpet, the Resurrection cry, 'Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.'

From all this we see what the foolish virgins are. They are Christians, and are so regarded, and as far as men can see they live Christian lives. Their lamps do not burn brightly perhaps. They are not burning and shining lights in the light of which other men rejoice. They are not beacons on a hill, or lamps set high on a

candlestick. It is conceivable that they may even be that, but not probable. But their lamps do burn. They seem Christians to those who know them. They live decent and better than decent lives. They show often right feelings and good dispositions. They are grieved with their own faults, and to all outward appearance try to mend them. They make sacrifices now and then; possibly very serious sacrifices on occasions when some extraordinary impulse urges them. They go through their duties fairly, steadily, with tolerable completeness. And they die without any knowing anything against them.

Now underneath all this there may have been the true oil of a spiritual life. There may have been that real spiritual principle which makes *the* difference between those who are Christ's people and those who are not. It is so impossible for us to judge each other that none can tell whether this flame has not been fed with the real love of holiness, of God, of Christ. But it may not be so. And when it is not so, this is one of the foolish virgins.

There are many helps provided by God to help us, weak and sinful creatures, to serve Him. There is a great deal both within us and without us that leads us toward His inviting arms. There are in us many good natural impulses battling with our natural sinfulness. Love of parents, love of friends, desire of the approval of conscience; impulses lower than these yet doing their part to aid us, love of praise, love of being loved, love of society. There are without us many influences tending the same way; the regulations of society, the influence of education, the consequences of our own acts; which,

though not always, yet on the whole, vastly preponderate on the side of what is right.

But that is not all. Besides the aids that God has thus supplied us with, many of these same impulses and influences He has constituted to be channels of His grace. In the love of parents we learn the love of God. In the desire of approval we learn to regard God's law. In submission to the rules of society we learn to submit to God's government. It is ever the human that leads us to the divine. The oil that God supplies is poured into a human vessel, namely, our human heart and will: nay, rather, the oil seems a sort of spiritual power which is not so much contained in the human as penetrates it, changes it, inspires it. So that the human is not taken away to make room for the divine, nor is it a mere vessel altogether distinguishable from the divine. But the divine is the human transformed, and the love of God is not a different love from that which we bear to our parents, but the same love filled with a heavenly power.

Now it seems to be just this which enables the soul that has either never had, or has quite burnt out, the heavenly oil, still to go on burning, perhaps even as long as life lasts. The heart indeed gets dried up and withered. There is no pleasure in duty done; no sweetness in devotion; no real earnestness in religion; no aspiration towards a truer holiness. But the duties are done out of habit; and sins are avoided mechanically; and prayers are said; and the decencies of life are observed. Perhaps if some sudden burst of temptation were to assail the man, his defences, not really maintained

by any vigour of faith, would fail him all at once, and a terrible fall would reveal his true condition. But without that there is nothing to tell him that his lamp is not burning as brightly as ever it did, as brightly as most of his neighbours'. It is true that if he looks closely at his life he can see without any difficulty a strange want of zeal and thoroughness in all that he does. He can see that he omits all duties which can well be omitted without outward reproach; that he does not care for doing his service really *well;* that he has rubbed off from his life all that finish, all that attention to even trifling things, which always marks the labour of love. He can see that his own conscience is not a friend to him, but a task-master, whom he thinks a hard taskmasker, and whom he is resolute to satisfy, but barely to satisfy, and not an atom more. He looks very carefully to see that a sacrifice is positively demanded before he makes it. If there is any doubt between inclination and duty he gives inclination the benefit of the doubt. If a duty seems of little importance he thinks a strong dislike reason enough for neglecting it. And yet on the whole, in spite of all these tokens, he never realises to himself that the oil in his lamp is all but, if not quite, burnt out, and that, if he still would be counted in the company of the faithful, he cannot be too speedy in going to them that sell to buy for himself. If he falls asleep so, the awful clearness of the other world will leave no mistake about the matter. There nothing can burn but the oil of love and faith, and the man who has it not will find his lamp gone out.

The nearer we come to Easter Day the closer should

our self-examination be. Let it be that we cannot charge ourselves with very gross neglect of duty; that we have not any heavy burden of sin to bear; that we have not any deadly habit which is secretly but surely working ruin in the soul. Still, what if the whole spirit and character of our life be godless? What if our fair show be all false? What if our prayers be forms, and our service of Christ a mere mechanical obedience to habits already formed? What if our good name mean no more than the absence of severe temptation? What if we are steadily moving on in the path which ends with the words, 'Verily, I say unto you, I know you not'?

It cannot be too late with us, for we are yet alive. And the very purpose of the parable is to warn us whilst it is yet not too late. But it is full time to look at the warning before we approach the commemoration of the day when our Lord died on the Cross to win our love and to cleanse our souls.

How shall we judge in such a matter? It is by the nature of the case not a plain disregard of God's commands; it is not like a definite sin; it is not like lying, or idleness, or impurity, or cross temper; it is a state which deceives other eyes and may deceive our own. Yes, but the tokens I have already described. See whether your duty is done with the care which indicates love, or with the niggardliness which indicates bondage. See whether your prayers come from the lips or from the heart and understanding. See whether you have bent your will to seek the will of Christ, or are really aiming at something else first, and at that second. See whether

you are fighting a true battle, or struggling half for the one great blessing, and half (ah! much more than half) for something else which you hope will come with it. See whether you long to be holy, and see whether that longing be a mere sentiment, or an active principle instantly having an effect on your life the moment you hear its call upon you. For here too you may be deceived, and when you are on your knees, or when you are alone, or when you are talking confidentially with an intimate friend, you may say, and say sincerely, with genuine feeling, 'I wish I were different; I wish I were better; I wish I had not this fault.' But presently your conscience will say to you: Go and do this; go and say that; go and pray; go and make it up with your friend; go and confess your fault. And then all this your longing to be better seems either to have quitted you, or to be silenced, or to be in some way or other powerless.

But above all, in face of this danger of which I have been speaking, be earnest in prayer. It is prayer which will tell you how low you have allowed your oil to sink. It is prayer which will buy for you that oil as you need it. Do not let yourself hurry your prayers; do not let yourself repeat them without meaning what you say. If you find that you are slipping into inattention, persist till you have recalled yourself. Do not let your soul slip away from the presence of your own conscience. Do not be content till you feel that your prayer has strengthened you. Do not leave off till God has put the needful resolution into your will. For indeed the memory of the Death and Resurrection of Christ is ever a fresh power in

the Christian soul. But the work which it will do depends on the state in which it finds us. If we enter next week in apathy, we cannot expect to feel its divine influence. If we are cold to begin with, most of its magic will have no hold upon us. Let us awake, my brethren, let us awake in time; let us stir up our hearts beforehand; let us look seriously, humbly, penitently to our tempers, to our aims, to the character of our devotions, to the spirit of our lives. Let us act as if we had never been Christians before, and were now going to begin for the first time. For we are approaching the presence of awful mysteries.

March 22, 1868.

SERMON XI.

GOD'S GRIEF AT SIN.

ST. MATTHEW xi. 27.

'Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.'

THERE can be no doubt that, according to the teaching of all the New Testament, one purpose which brought our Lord to earth was to reveal His Father to mankind. In the Son we read, translated into human life, the character of God. According to our Lord's own words, 'He that hath seen Him hath seen the Father,' so that if any man asks, show us the Father, the answer is given in the life and person of His Son. So, again, St. Paul tells us that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.' So St. John declares that 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.' This is the only perfect revelation of God that can be made; because words necessarily fail from want of breadth and fulness. To live God's life amongst men was the only method possible to teach us God's nature.

Now it cannot be denied that the part of the Divine nature thus revealed to us, which is most pressed upon us, which is most insisted on, which is most essentially a revelation, which most transcends all conception that men could have formed for themselves, is the love of God. That God loves us is indeed a very natural article of faith, within the reach of philosophers among the heathen, of warm-hearted and good men who have had no teaching, of ourselves without either study or depth of devotion. But that He loves us in the sense in which the New Testament sets forth His love, that His love when represented by human actions should take the form of such a life as that of our Redeemer, that nothing short of a life of self-sacrifice, and finally a death of pain and shame, should fitly represent to us the depth, and the force, and the whole nature of the divine love for man, this is undeniably far beyond what any philosopher ever dreamt of, what the best and warmest-hearted man could ever have imagined, what any of us without revelation could ever have taken into our minds.

Let us observe step by step the gradations of this one thought, that God loves us.

We call it an evidence of His love that He has surrounded us with such an overflowing profusion of means of happiness. However the world was brought to its present state, the result, as we see it, is an inexhaustible storehouse of everything that can at once delight and improve and elevate. There is no doubt much pain and unhappiness; but even underneath pain and un-

happiness what a marvellous power seems to be ever at work bringing forth blessings in still greater abundance than the evils from which they spring! Pain is never simply pain, but always in some way or other a means to greater goodness, or even to greater happiness afterwards. If you look at the human race as a whole, it is undeniable that what it has suffered has taught it many lessons which it would not otherwise have learnt. If you look at each man's life separately you will invariably see that whatever pain he has had to bear always could have done him good, and in most cases actually has done him good. And meanwhile, over and above the good that has thus come out of evil, there is much that is mere and pure good, the free gift of Him who made all things not in wisdom only but in love. This side of God's nature was no doubt seen by many without any revelation at all. You will find it spoken of with even more fulness and emphasis in heathen writings than in the Bible. Our Lord touches on it often. He reminds us how the Father makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. He teaches us that God hath clothed the very grass of the field, and knows our need of clothing and of food. He tells us that the very hairs of our head are numbered, and that a watchful Providence not only notes every moment of our lives, but even is with the sparrow that falls to the ground. But it was not our Lord's special purpose to reveal this love. It might have been inferred, and, as I said just now, it was inferred without any revelation at all.

A different kind of love, a love that thrills the heart much more deeply, a love that seems in a far truer sense to be personal and individual, a love which, unaided by revelation, we might perhaps have thought it presumption in any sense to ascribe to God, is that which makes sacrifices, which bears pain, which denies itself. To show love by bounty, by pouring out of an overflowing store, is excellent. The love for his kind which a wealthy man shows when he cheerfully shares his wealth with those who are in need; the love for her children which makes a tender mother devise means of happiness for them; the love which is considerate and thoughtful and delights in bestowing pleasure; all this is most excellent. But it seems to fade when put side by side with the love which bears pain and sorrow, which averts evil at the cost of self-sacrifice, which unflinchingly and with brave cheerfulness practises daily self-denial, which finds in its very love something stronger than any selfish wish, something better worth having than any enjoyment, something worth purchasing at any cost of burden to be borne, hope to be disappointed, happiness to be given up. Here clearly steps in the revelation of Christ. Does God's love really mean this? Is His love, when put into a form which we can comprehend, a love which sacrifices, which endures, which is thrilled with sympathy? There are things in heaven that we cannot fathom, and we know that we cannot. But how is it consistent with the awful, the unapproachable perfection of the Divine nature, that it should be touched with our sorrows? There is a mystery here,

indeed, far beyond the power of our understandings. But about this there can be no mystery at all: that if our Lord's life be a revelation of God to man, this love too is represented there. Not mere bounty from an inexhaustible store, not mere profusion of blessings bestowed in kindness but costing no effort to bestow, not that goodness only which, having no difficulty in creating what it will, creates what is best for us and delights in seeing us enjoy it. But far beyond this, the love that can only be expressed by anxious and earnest prayer, by the surrender of all self, by privations simply and quietly borne, by love even unto death, by perseverance even through the agony which prayed unavailingly that the cup might pass away, this is the love of God for man, this is our Father's love for His children. Can it be that God should feel pain? that there should be room in His nature for self-sacrifice? that He should be able to practise self-denial? I know not how to answer these questions. At any other time, in the presence of any other thoughts, they would seem to me irreverent. But this I know, that in the only perfect revelation of God to man, the love that we see is that which lives in self-denial and lays down life itself for those who are loved.

This is indeed a revelation, inconceivable, unattainable to human imaginations. This, most assuredly, if we had not the life of the Lord Jesus before us, we could never have presumed to ascribe to God. And yet even this is not all.

It would be possible to conceive a love such as this,

yet limited by the condition that the creatures who were so loved had in them a divine purity, a heavenly beauty of character, an answering warmth and depth and force of love in return for love, something, in short, that in some degree might seem to justify this strange and almost inconceivable tenderness. We might imagine to ourselves a pure and holy Being, surrounding with an endless fountain of affection those who were His own children, but whom sorrow had in some way overtaken. We can imagine the love with which a father watches over a son who has never grieved him; the sacrifices which a father would make, the labour he would undergo, the pain he would cheerfully bear for a son who had never wounded his love. Nor would it be difficult to add to that the idea of a Being so holy that sin should quench love altogether, and shut out the sinner from all share of tenderness.

Not this is the revelation made by the Lord Jesus to mankind. Even still more plain than the self-sacrifice which can be seen in every record of His life is the grief which pierces His heart at the sins of those whom He came to heal, and whom in spite of their sin He cannot forsake. The love which does not cast off the sinner but is grieved to the very heart at the sin, the love which still loves but loves with a deep and never-resting anguish at heart, the love of a mother who cannot forget her child, but of a holy mother who is cut to the very heart at that child's evil life, the love which cries above all else that the loved one shall be holy and yet loves on in spite of stained purity, and disgraced name, and cold ingratitude,

does not even this fall short of the conception that we form of the love of God when we read the life of Christ? That He should be grieved at our sins,—not that He should be angry, that seems to come from His holiness and ineffable purity, not that He should threaten punishment, that seems to belong to the Judge rather than the Father,—but that our sin should wound Him, that it should give Him pain to see it as it gives pain to a human father, this as it were brings us close to His very heart. It is not for our goodness that He loves us, for then our sins would cast us out at once; it is not because we love Him; it is not because we have repented and are trying to come back to Him. No, He loves us for ourselves; because He is love; because in His own nature He has a divine incapacity of ceasing to love; because He yearns over us as a mother over a fallen son, and He longs to bring us back to Himself. And so our sins grieve Him. More plain even than His wrath against sin is His grief over it. We cannot be mistaken as we read our Lord's words, and how He lived, and how He died, and what He did. We cannot be mistaken in this, that our sins were an infinite grief to Him, a deep wound, a pain never forgotten. We can imagine a just judge, full of the majesty of the law which he administers, punishing sin to vindicate the law, sorry to see any need the punishment, but ever restrained in his sorrow by the thought that the holy law must be upheld, and that all else must be put aside for the sake of that. But that is not the conception that we draw from our Redeemer's death.

Holiness there is, and the regard for holiness, and never a word is said, and never a trace can be seen, to indicate a passing hint that perhaps holiness will not be needed. But the leading idea is that of deep grief rather than of anger, of a heart wounded to the depths rather than of a judge offended. Our sins pierce Him; our want of love is an agony. Not the nails, not the spear, not the burning thirst, not the lingering fainting death, are to Him the anguish of the anger, and the malice, and the scorn, in which He can see all around Him the sin of mankind whom He came to redeem.

That God is our Father, is the fundamental faith of the Gospel. The Apostles' Creed, which every Christian Church alike has for ages made the condition of Baptism, what is it but an expansion of that first article that God is our Father? It tells us little of the Divine nature or of the Divine attributes. It is nothing but a record of the proofs that God has given that He is our Father. He made us. He gave us His Son, even unto death. He sends us His Holy Spirit. He has placed us in His Church, in the midst of the Communion of Saints. He offers us the forgiveness of sins. He invites us to come to Himself when this world is over and to live with Him for ever. And what, then, do we mean by calling Him our Father? What is it but to acknowledge this strange, this unimaginable love which past all human understanding still and ever surrounds us and penetrates our being? And of this love the last and highest revelation is that which is made to us this day, that every sin that we do grieves His very heart. Oh, my brethren! oh, children

of Christ! oh, sons of God, whom God so loved and still loves, whom the Lord Jesus died for, whom He watches unceasingly, endeavour to save Him the pain of seeing you do wrong! I speak not of punishment; surely this thought is stronger than the fear of punishment. I appeal not to your fears in any way; but to your gratitude, to your affection, to the tenderness with which God is regarding you. Do not grieve Him by disregarding your own conscience. Do not vex Him by slighting His love. It pierces His very heart when you are disobedient and unloving. He feels it as He feels nothing else. Take this thought with you into your life. Let it give new power to your conscience; let it awake your will; let it be the key-note of your daily thoughts, 'I will try not to do wrong, for it vexes the Lord that loves me.'

April 10, 1868. (Good Friday.)

SERMON XII.

THE GREATNESS AND LITTLENESS OF MAN.

PSALM viii. 3, 4.

'When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?'

THE old and striking contrast between the greatness and the littleness of man is partly founded on a true instinct of humility, partly on the ignorance which is inevitable in this our present life. But either way it must be often present to our thoughts, and may aid us or hinder us according to the use that we make of it. We may use the thought to chill our own devotion to what is excellent, to laugh at our own or still more at our fellow-Christian's efforts, to represent all heavenly aspirations as folly, and the peace of conscience as childish; or we may use it to maintain the true balance of our spirits, to deepen our sense of dependence on God, to prevent rising self-conceit, to purify our service from all that is vain or silly, and yet at the same time to learn wherein our true dignity lies.

It is not difficult or unnatural to put the thought to

a wrong use. When we are tried by the small conflicts of daily life, much depends on the result of the trial. It is a matter of real consequence, and sometimes it involves a real battle with ourselves, that we shall keep our temper, that we shall be true and open, that we shall be just, that we shall be unselfish. To win a victory in such little battles is not a trifle. And yet how easy it is to laugh at the result! You have kept your temper: well, and what then? Is it so very great a thing? And if you had not kept your temper, would the world have fallen in, or would some fearful catastrophe have overtaken your neighbours? You have resisted a temptation to selfishness. Well, and what then? Is it so great a thing that you have done what a gentleman was bound to do? And even if you had not, would the world have all gone wrong because of it? Can it really make any difference what you do or what you are? You have made a great effort, and at the cost of what you thought superhuman exertion, you have heroically—what? Told the truth: repressed a bad thought: kept down an unkind word that was on your lips. Considering the very small importance that belongs to you in God's creation, would it have been much if you had spared your great efforts, and done the wrong that you have avoided? Supposing that you were to go altogether wrong, would that much affect the sum total of good and evil in the universe? There are more millions than can be counted of living things that now exist. Many more millions have existed in past times. There can be little doubt that many more will

exist in future. In all this great creation, what possible effect can your single life have on the whole? or what account can be taken of what you do, or omit to do? You refuse to take part in something that you think is wrong, and you resist the temptation to evil with your whole strength. What can be more absurd? What more could you do if the question at issue affected the happiness of the whole race of man? You fight hard against some besetting sin. What could you do more than fight hard against some evil which, if unresisted, would ruin all mankind, and which, if resisted, could be destroyed? Your toil is altogether out of all proportion to the issue that is to come from it. You pray, and you resolve, and you battle with yourself, and you give up your thoughts and your anxious wishes to some small victory over appetite, or over inclination, or over old habit, without considering whether, after all, the result is worth the trouble. Say that you are a little truer and better-tempered, a little more unselfish, a little more conscientious than you were this time last year, is it really worth the cost that you are paying for it? Considering how utterly unimportant you are, is it not absurd to sacrifice all ease of life to your own improvement? Take a larger view, and see how steadily the world goes on with no reference to you at all. The sun rises and sets, the seasons come and go, the trees are green in summer and shed their leaves in winter; nay, the course of human history moves in its regular path just the same, whether you do well or ill, whether you are wise or silly, whether you are bad or good.

Dismiss your self-conceit, and learn that it makes no difference whatever what you are, or do, or wish, or think, and that it is inconceivable that God, who made the vast universe, should care about you one way or the other.

Such thoughts as these thus running on from a confession of human littleness up to a disbelief in God's love and care for His creatures have occurred to many minds, and in greater or less degree influence most of us, if not consciously, yet secretly. It is undeniably difficult to us to believe the enormous importance of our own lives and characters, our own souls in the sight of God our Father. Not many, perhaps, would come to the downright conclusion that it made no difference whether we did right or wrong, but very many are induced to think that it cannot make much difference. We measure, unconsciously, by a false standard, and when we read in the Bible, that 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city,' we accept the words rather as poetically than as literally true; for it is always difficult for us to see how vast a gulf separates right and wrong from everything else that we know.

The littleness of man consists in two things, his smallness and his weakness. The greatness of man consists in his spiritual nature.

Man is small. The heavens are vast; vaster far than the writer of the eighth Psalm had any idea of. And the sun is larger, and the moon; and the stars, and the spaces that separate the stars. And within

certain limits this seems to us to make no difference. We do not think a man of more importance because he is bigger; nor do we think whales or elephants of more importance than ourselves. But beyond those limits our imagination seems overpowered, and even vastness of space seems to confer a kind of importance in itself, and it seems hard to believe that a creature no bigger than a man should have any importance in the eyes of the Creator who made the sun. But this is not all. Man is small in a double sense. He is small in size, but he is also small as being one unit in a vast multitude. There are many more of his kind. If one go wrong, or if one be lost, there are millions to spare.

Once again, man is weak. And this seems a still greater reason for despising him. The difference between smallness and vastness is, after all, external and material. However much we are struck with it at first, the more we reflect, the less important it seems; and it may be that we arrive at last at something like scorn for those who would lay any stress on it at all. But the difference between weakness and strength is of another and a higher sort, and it is plain enough that man is weak. God has given man wonderful knowledge, knowledge at which the possessors cannot but marvel; but all the more striking is the contrast between that great knowledge and the little strength that goes with it. Man is weak. He cannot alter in the very slightest degree the laws that God has stamped on nature, and his power to act under those laws is limited

to a trifling muscular force. By the use of his knowledge he can produce effects far beyond the reach of his muscles; but when he has done all that he can, his imagination outstrips it all so easily, that he is only still more conscious of his weakness. What he does can only be done by the aid of time, and thought, and combination. His very possessions are the accumulation of many generations, and seem due rather to the direction of an overruling law or government than to his own efforts. It might seem that, if he had been a creature of high value, he would have been entrusted with greater powers, and that his dominion over sea and land and all therein would not have been so hampered and restrained. Compare the forces that are given to man with those that are implanted in Nature. Compare human strength with the power of the earthquake, the volcano, the hurricane. Compare it with the violence of fire, with the force of an inundation. These dead material powers make all human strength a mere plaything.

This is one side. Man is small and man is weak. The spaces of the universe mock his littleness, and the forces of Nature mock his weakness. Can God care what becomes of him? But, on the other side, he has a soul, and he is a member of the kingdom of spirits, and this is his greatness.

However small and however weak he may be, yet he has that which puts him above sun, and moon, and stars, and all the vast bodies, and all the enormous forces of the universe, simply because he can do right, and can

do wrong, and they cannot. Their greatness, in reality, is enhanced by his, and not his by theirs. When a dreadful earthquake convulses a whole country, the only thing which gives it importance is, that it has brought destruction and misery and sudden terror on a vast number of human beings. If a planet were to be burnt up before our eyes, the only thing which would make it more than a stupendous spectacle would be, that it should have been inhabited, like our own, by creatures with souls. If the sun were to be blotted out, the chief importance of the change would be found in its effect on human life. With all the greatness of all these things, man made in the image of God is greater still.

One revelation measures the difference between man and all other creatures. We have an account in the Bible of the creation; we have also an account of the redemption. The most striking characteristic of the description of the creation is its supreme and absolute ease. Without attempting to press the mere words or images used in the first chapter of Genesis, this at least is plain, that the writer would have us feel that to God the act of creating cost no effort at all. He said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. No toil, nor thought, nor time, nor force are requisite. He utters the words, and His words create. How far other is the account of the redemption? To lift the human soul from darkness to light, what trials it cost, what labour, what time, what suffering! The creation was the work of a word. The redemption was the work of a life—of a life of self-denial, of a death on the Cross. The

creation cost God nothing. The redemption cost the death of His Son, and all that that death implied.

Measure the distance between the words 'Let there be light' and the words 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani,' and that will shew the interval which separates the value of the created Universe from the value of Man.

Christians can ask no other measure of the greatness of the human soul. Christians can ask no further proof of the infinite importance of human life and human action. The self-conquests that seem so small, the resistance to temptation, the triumphs over besetting sin, the keeping of the temper, the sacrifice of self, the adherence to truth—measure them by their share in the Cross of Christ, and see who can call them little things. And in this, too, as in so much else, revelation does but proclaim what is ever whispered in the inmost shrine of the spirit given to man. The creation that we see is vast, and its forces are mighty, but vaster far and mightier far out of all comparison are those eternal differences between right and wrong on which rest for ever the feet of the throne of God.

May 3, 1868.

SERMON XIII.

THE SENSE OF SIN.

PSALM li. 17.

'*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.*'

WE make a distinction between religion and morality, and we feel that the distinction is one of deep importance. We see a difference between the man whom we call a religious man, and the man whom we call a moral man; and we recognise that the difference is not a superficial difference, but that it pierces down into the innermost nature. Religion includes morality; it is morality and something more. If a man be not moral he cannot be religious in any full sense. A religion which had in it no morality would be a mere delusion. A man who professed to be religious and yet indulged himself in evil, broke God's law, lived a careless life, such a man would be pronounced at once either a hypocrite or a fanatic, either a deceiver or self-deceived. But though religion and morality are thus bound together, yet morality is only a part of religion; and the omission of the other part makes a deep difference in the character and condition of the soul.

What, then, is the difference? What is it which religion has which morality has not?

The great and fundamental difference is that religion always includes a reference to a person, and not merely to a rule. The moral man obeys a rule. The religious man worships a ruler. The highest conception of morality is an unearthly law, supreme over all things, demanding perfect obedience, admitting no exception, punishing every transgression with remorse and loss of self-respect, and never under any circumstances ceasing to proclaim its own absolute superiority to everything that exists. The highest conception of religion is of a supreme Ruler, as holy, as absolutely perfect, as entirely superior to all things that exist as the moral Law itself; but adding to these characteristics consciousness of His own nature, and purposes, and living will. And to this conception the revelation of the Bible adds that this supreme Ruler loves all His creatures as no creature can love, and that He is not only the Creator, and the King, and the Lawgiver, but also the Father of His own creation.

This is the fundamental difference. But this difference would remain the same whatever might be the nature of the beings that gave their minds to note it. This is the difference between religion and morality. And the difference between the religious and the moral man consists in the submission of the soul to the one thought or to the other thought. He who gives up his life to, and accepts as his guide, and uses as his standard, a divine rule or law, is a moral man. He who tries to love, and obey, and please, and win the approval of a Divine

Ruler, he is a religious man. But let us go a step further and ask of what sort of men are they who are most inclined to the one, and of what sort they who are most inclined to the other. What is the difference, to begin with, which makes some men disposed to be contented with morality, and others unhappy without religion? What is it which lifts men to the higher, that is, to the religious level? Can we find any characteristic which distinguishes religious men, as such, and predisposes them to be religious?

The answer is given by the verse which I have read from the fifty-first Psalm. It is the sense of sin.

If you look not at the difference between religion and morality, but at the difference which predisposes one man to be religious and makes another man stop short at mere morality, you will find it just here. To one man the fifty-first Psalm seems the most natural of all prayers, of all confessions, at all times: to the other it seems to be a beautiful expression of the repentance of some man who had grievously sinned, but hardly to find place in daily life, and the experience of daily life. To the religious man, or even to the man who has within him the germs of religious life, the fifty-first Psalm never seems out of place: to the man who has not got any such need of religion, the fifty-first Psalm will sometimes seem appropriate and sometimes not. The one man understands the broken and contrite heart to be always required; the other thinks that there are times when the heart ought to be contrite, and that there are also times when there is no need for contrition.

See, then, how this difference affects the life.

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First observe how it affects repentance. The moral man will repent of wrong-doing with a very deep and real regret; with a keen sense of shame, perhaps with a sense of shame all the keener, because there is often a touch of pride mingled with mere morality; with a resolute will not to sin again; and, above all, with the fullest atonement that can be made for the wrong. A man of this sort, if he be true to himself (and I am only speaking of those who are true to themselves, for otherwise the comparison would be worthless), a man of this sort, if he had lost his temper, would openly apologise; if he had slandered his neighbour, would openly confess; if he had wronged his neighbour in anything that touched his property, would fully restore. A man of this sort would never be content with anything short of undoing all that he had done wrong as far as it was possible to undo it. But there repentance would of necessity stop. The fact that he had done wrong he could not undo; and much of the consequences of the wrong-doing he could not set right. This, then, he would leave undone. And here would come in, here always do come in, two temptations. One is that our wrong-doing, if we have a high standard, is so frequent that a kind of despair takes possession of the man, and the lofty standard of repentance sinks down into a mere making the best of it and then hiding it away; the other is, that not merely the high standard of repentance sinks, but the high standard of life sinks too. He finds that his notion of right is, as it were, out of his reach, and he gives up trying to reach it. Why is this? It is because

when he repents he can see nothing further than a need to set right the evil that he has done, as far as he can set it right, and to do the wrong thing no more. Not so the religious man. To him every fault is much more than an evil to be set right for the present and avoided for the future. He finds in his faults a revelation of his own nature. He sees in his own fall a stain upon his soul. He is driven out of himself to find some divine medicine to heal his sickness, some divine aid to help his weakness. He longs for something more than a setting right and a forgetting; he longs for a change of nature. He desires not merely to do differently for the future, but to be different. He wishes to be a new man. He feels not merely that he has done wrong, but that he is evil; and he desires to be purified of a mischief that is much deeper and more pervading than the single fault which has revealed its presence. And so his repentance is never complete till he begins to feel that his Heavenly Father has forgiven him, and will, if not at once, yet at last, purify him too. Nor does he allow himself to forget his sin till he feels that his Father allows him to forget it; nor does he think of it as past and gone till he feels that his Father wills it to be past and gone.

Turn again to the difference not in repentance but in aim. The moral man's aim may be high and noble; though the stains of life will mar it as time goes on, if his nature be not singularly strong. His aim may, however, be high. But of necessity he looks more to the acts of the will than to the impulses of nature. He would

live a pure, and just, and true life; and if strong impulses to evil assail his soul, he will stand fast against them. But what if he do not stand fast? What if he find them, and most certainly he will find them, too much for him? He is driven to say this is the weakness of his nature. To the weakness of human nature he assigns his falls; to the weakness of human nature he assigns the evil thoughts, the wrong inclinations, the many little beginnings of sin, the slips, the omissions, the half-unconscious, half-conscious sins that mar even a good man's course. To the weakness of human nature he assigns little acts of selfishness, touches of pride, fits of ill-temper, unfairnesses of speech, indolence that has neglected a duty, lapses from perfect purity of thought. To the weakness of human nature, as time goes on, he will assign the particular sin that besets his life, the lack of perseverance in loftiness of aim, the loss of the generosity of youth, the loss of warmth of heart, the growing worldliness, the deadness which creeps over any soul not kept in contact with God. And the weakness of human nature does not mean with him something to be mourned over, and repented of, and striven against, until God in His infinite love shall see fit to heal it; but something that he cannot help, and for which he is not responsible. Not so the religious man. That phrase, 'the weakness of human nature,' means in his mouth a manifestation of the sin from which he is ever striving to escape. Just those very things of which the weakness of human nature may be called the excuse, those very things he prays against, and he strives with, and he brings

again and again to God that they may be cleansed away. Just such faults are to him the proof of his own sinfulness. Just such faults make him come with contrite heart to the Father who alone can heal them. To him they are sins, and they awake in him all the sense of sin, and his great hope through life is that at least he may so far be kept from sins like these as not to find them standing like a cloud between himself and his Father's face; and his knowledge that they are due to the weakness of his own nature does not diminish his sense that they are sins, but only drives him to seek for his Father's aid to do what he finds that unaided he cannot do.

The contrite heart is the sacrifice that pleases God. How can we bring it? By taking care throughout life never to let the edge of conscience be blunted by that strong inclination which we all of us have to palliate and excuse and soften what our consciences condemn in our lives. What is wrong in us we are tempted to call by soft names—to bury out of our sight under all sorts of excuses. We are tempted to look away from the sin and fix our eyes on anything that shall make it seem less black than it is. We are tempted to say, It has not done much harm; it is what every one does; or, it was but the act of a moment; or, it is past, and it is of no use to trouble ourselves about it; or, the best thing that we can do is to avoid it for the future. And meanwhile, the one great question is, whether it has pleased or displeased God, and that one question we do not like to face, because conscience will assuredly give it a very sad answer. But that is the question that the Christian must put

to himself, and having put it, must take both it and the answer to God. For here, in the sense of sin, in the conviction of the evil that is within us, and from which we must somehow be set free, in the longing to be cleansed, and forgiven, and renewed, shall we find the beginnings of Christian life at first, and the true call to Christian life ever afterwards. Here shall we find the strong impulse that will not let the soul rest till it has found the forgiveness promised by the Cross. Here shall we find the sacrifice that God demands in return for His inexhaustible love. Here shall we find the never-failing upward spring which sends the soul ever on high. For in reality this sense of sin is nothing else than the voice of God speaking in the depths of the being of man.

May 10, 1868.

SERMON XIV.

LOVE THE EVIDENCE OF FAITH.

ST. JOHN xvi. 26–32.

'*At that day ye shall ask in My name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto Him, Lo, now speakest Thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask Thee: by this we believe that Thou camest forth from God.' Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.*'

IN this passage our Lord speaks of belief in Himself, and His disciples speak of the same. It shows us in some respects what this belief or faith really is, if we examine what is here said.

For our Lord speaks of their belief in Him as one of the reasons why the Father loved them. But He puts it second. He puts their belief after their love. 'The Father loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have

believed that I came out from God.' This is the true and only sure order of the growth of faith in the soul. It begins with love. That which holds a man to the belief in Christ, that which supplies, as it were, the root to his faith, is love. Faith is worth little, can stand little temptation, unless it is rooted in love. The true Christian finds in the character of the Lord that which his heart can love: and because of that he believes. To use quite different language, which comes to the same thing, St. Paul tells us, that in Christ the promises of God are yea and amen. Those promises which are written in the soul of man receive their answer, their confirmation, their fulfilment, in the life of our Lord. But to whom are these promises, and who can read them? The heart that loves. Love what is good, and then you will recognise the good when you see it. Give your heart to the excellent, to the heavenly, to the godlike, and then when it is presented to you you will believe in it. Faith does not really rest on arguments, whether numerous or weighty. These are useful in their place, but their place is rather negative than positive, to answer objections, to settle doubts, to make assurance sure. Faith rests on the correspondence between the revelation of God and the soul of man. And the beginning of this correspondence is the love of the heavenly.

You will observe, however, that that is not the notion of the disciples. They rested their faith on quite a different ground. They had been listening for some time to our Lord's discourse, and they found in it a great

deal that they could not understand. In particular our Lord had said, that in a little while they should be unable to see Him, and then in a little while more they should see Him again. They did not know what He meant, and were longing to know. Our Lord saw their perplexity and their desire for explanation, and without waiting till they should put the question, He explained His own words. They were struck with His knowledge of their thoughts. It seemed to them a proof that He knew all things. They felt that there could never be a necessity to ask Him questions, because He would be sure to know the questions before they were asked, and to give them an answer, if an answer were proper. This seemed to them a convincing proof of His Divine mission and Divine origin. 'By this we believe that Thou camest forth from God.'

But our Lord, who knew their faith and had just before spoken of it, knew also that this weak part of it, which rested only on what seemed to them strange and supernatural power, was worthless in the hour of trial. 'Do ye now believe?' He replies: 'Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone.' The conviction which they so gladly acknowledged was in reality a mere transient feeling, due to something that had excited their wonder, with no real hold on their hearts and lives, with no power to stand against any real trial, certain to break down when any test was applied to it which should require real strength. They believed that He came forth from God. Where was

their belief an hour or two later when the soldiers came and He was led away a prisoner before their eyes? Where was their belief when none but Peter and John went to His trial, and Peter denied Him? Where was their belief when not one stood by His side before Pilate? The belief seemed to have vanished as quickly as it came. But were they therefore quite faithless? No. What was it that kept them all together? what gathered them round the risen Lord? what bound them firmer than ever before to His person? It was the faith of which our Lord had spoken, the faith that was rooted in love. They loved, and therefore they believed, and therefore, in spite of their own desertion, they returned to their allegiance.

Now nothing is more common than this fancy which leads men to rest their faith on some striking event, on some remarkable experience, or fulfilment, or apparent fulfilment of prophecy. One man is much struck with the way in which our Lord's life corresponds to a minute detail in some passage of the prophets. Another man finds a miraculous coincidence between the words of some psalm and an event of our Lord's life. Another man, again, is struck with something in his own life and experience; some prayer has been fulfilled in a very remarkable way; he has been saved out of some danger; some sin has been checked, or even punished, by what looks like a direct interference of God. Such things often make a very strong impression. They seem sometimes almost demonstrations to the mind that has observed them. 'By this I know,' says a man, 'that the

Bible is true; by this I know that Christ is the Lord; by this I know that God hears prayer.' Nor is there anything wrong in allowing such arguments to strike our minds, provided we recognise how poor and shallow is the faith which rests on any such foundation. Let these things help us if they can; but let us know too that if we were to rely on them, and fancy that the truth of God can be proved by such arguments as these, we should be making the same mistake as the disciples just before our Lord's arrest. A faith which rests on such external events and coincidences, or what seems surprising and strange, or what looks like the interference of Providence with the course of nature, such a faith will be shaken by other events of the same kind. A man who rests his faith on the coincidence of remarkable texts may receive a terrible shake if he learns that the text has been mistranslated or misinterpreted. A man who thinks that some prayer of his has received a direct and explicit answer ought to be deeply grateful; but if he cherishes the feeling that this proves to him the very existence of God, he will be perhaps severely tried when some occasion comes on which he prays yet more earnestly and yet, as far as he can see, prays in vain. The faith, in short, which rests on what is outside is at the mercy of what is outside.

What is that which holds the soul fast, nay, which will often bring the soul back after it has been to all appearance quite carried away? It is the faith which is bound up with love. It was not assuredly because

our Lord answered the questions which they had not yet put to Him, and thus showed His power to read their thoughts, that the disciples came back to Him after they had been scattered and had left Him alone. It was because they remembered what He was and what His life had been; it was because of the divine beauty that had shone from all that He did and said; it was because He had won their hearts and they could not lose Him; it was because they had learnt to love Him, that after all they came back. They must have known when they came back that there was much unintelligible to them in His life. They must have known that their hopes had all been wrong. They must have been bitterly disappointed at finding that their Prince did not resist the Romans, and that, as far as they could see, the promised kingdom which they had been eagerly expecting for a year, was not to be theirs; and such a disappointment would have been enough to drive away all followers whose faith had no deeper root than some striking proof of superhuman knowledge. But however much they may have been disappointed, they loved Him. Their faith seemed to have perished: but it had not perished. Deep down in their hearts was a secret conviction that somehow He was still their Lord. The two who are walking to Emmaus that Easter Sunday afternoon are a sample of the rest. Their hearts are clinging to loving memories which they cannot lose. He is gone; it is not what they expected; but He has not, He cannot have, deceived them. What can His departure mean?

This exactly tallies with our Lord's declaration that

God had hid the truth from the wise and prudent and had revealed it to babes. The evidence of the Gospel will employ all the wisdom of the wise, all the learning of the learned. But neither the wise nor the learned shall outrun the babes in laying hold of the revelation of the Gospel. That which makes men believers is the loving heart, and that babes may have as well as the wisest; nay, the wisest have to become babes if they would have it at all. Men's belief will find in the Bible, in history, in nature, in the experience of life, much to confirm it, much to fortify it against doubts, much to give it intellectual interest. Moreover a wide study which can balance all the evidence fairly, will certainly find in that balance of the evidence much to satisfy the reason of a Christian that he has got possession of the truth. But there are times of trial when a faith of this kind, if it be only a faith of this kind, will not stand firm; when too much is staked on it, and a man says to himself, 'I ought to be very sure of my belief if I am to bear all this for the sake of it,' as was often the case in apostolic days; or again, when for a season the balance of evidence seems to incline the wrong way, as must be the case with most students; or again, when some accident has torn up a good many prejudices and mistakes of ours, and by so doing has loosened all convictions of every kind, as must be the case in days of inquiry: when such times come, what holds a man fast, what enables him to wait for a while and suspend his judgment till he can look at his doubts fairly and face them, what makes him sure that come

what may God is still God and still his Father? Surely it is that he has known and loved and bound up in his heart the excellence of the revelation of the Gospel.

The man, whether young or old, who is storing up in his soul a real love for what is good, is building within him a sure faith. He may have to change some of his opinions; he may have to give up some that he has cherished much. He may find that arguments which seemed to him weighty are worth nothing. He may at times be sorely tried, and perhaps his faith may even fail, as the faith of the Apostles failed when they saw their Master led off unresistingly to prison. But his faith has a real root, a root deep in the very inmost soul. And he shall not be taken away from God nor lose his hold on God's truth. He may wander, but he will return: for God's finger has touched him.

This is, here in this world, the special blessing bestowed on the loving life. To love God's will, to try to do your duty so as to please Him, to try to take Him for your King and Father, will not guarantee you against faults by any means, will not save you from many temptations, nor make you always resist them; nor will it make your life always happy; nor will it prevent you from feeling depressed sometimes, and down-hearted; nor will it clear your brain always and show you what is the right thing to do; nor will it make study of the Bible unnecessary, and give you without any reading or thinking of your own the teaching of the Gospel; but it will bind you to the truth and to God as nothing else will. The heart that has tried to

serve God lovingly falls sometimes, but always repents; is unhappy sometimes, but is sure to be soon cheered; is perplexed sometimes and makes mistakes, perhaps grievous mistakes, but never mistakes that are fatal to spiritual life; but above all, if ever it fails in faith, if ever it wanders away from truth, if ever for a time it loses sight of God, it is sure to be recalled sooner or later by the secret cord which has once fastened it to its Father and Redeemer; for the love of God is a cord which nothing ever breaks.

May 17, 1868.

SERMON XV.

WEAKNESS.

ST. MATTHEW xii. 20.

'A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory.'

ALL our service is imperfect, and if we may not offer imperfect service we cannot offer any. And this is repeatedly taught in the Bible, and the largest allowances for human weakness are perpetually promised. We are told that God will pardon sins if we repent, that He will not only forgive them but take them entirely away. We are told that 'if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins:' that 'if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' And this doctrine is absolutely needed, for without it we should soon despair. Even the holiest will need at times the support that is given by the thought of his own weakness, and will need to encourage himself to repentance by remembering that God does not expect perfection in act, though He does expect perfection in aim and purpose.

But there are nevertheless certain dangers attending

this necessary doctrine which it is well to consider. For there is, first, the danger that we shall be tempted to palliate what is wrong by using this plea of weakness, and to think little of very grave faults. And there is, secondly, the danger not a whit less serious that we shall lower our aim, and not even try to be perfect in the future. And along with these there is the danger of lowering our whole religious standard, and fancying that good men and bad men, good lives and bad lives, do not differ so very widely.

The declaration of our Lord's character, that 'He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax,' is intended to comfort and cheer those who can barely stand upright, or perhaps have not stood upright; those whose religious life can hardly be said to have the heat of a real flame, but only the smouldering that makes the flax smoke. Such men, conscious that they love God and God's service, but love faintly and fitfully, would be crushed at once if they were told, 'Nothing is of any value unless it is complete. Serve God thoroughly, or you might just as well not serve Him at all.' If we were in all cases met with the stern requirement of an unbending rule, if every weak effort to serve God were treated as worthless because it was weak, if all religious life that did not get beyond smouldering were utterly disregarded as valueless, many of us would find it impossible even to begin to repent. God's heart goes forth to meet His erring children. The Good Shepherd goes forth to seek His wandering sheep. The least struggle of the weak creature towards the great Creator; the slightest throb of

real feeling; the passing warmth of transient generosity or self-sacrifice, all these have their true value in the heavenly account. From these beginnings sometimes comes at last the saintly life. These weak stirrings are often the first breath of the Divine inspiration. God will not despise them. Where a man would be inclined to say, 'This half repentance is no repentance at all: this shallow love is worse than no love: this halting service is an insult, not a homage;' there God says, 'Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

But it is a very unhappy perversion of all this love if we use it for the very opposite purpose from that for which it was intended. For it was intended to touch our hearts and help us to God; but it may be used, nay it often is used, to lull our consciences to sleep while we stay away from God.

Apply it to the past. You have done wrong. God tells you that He knows your weakness; that He loves you still; that He will receive you and help you in spite of it; that however weak you are you need not fear to come to Him, for He will aid you to come in spite of your weakness. What a perversion of this it is to say, 'My fault was not so very great; it was but the weakness of human nature; I am better than I seem; I have within me better desires, and warmer feelings, and higher aims; I must not be judged by this fault alone.' O Christian, be sure of God's love, how ever sinful you have been; but do not use the promises of that love to harden your conscience, and to teach the spirit within you to

prophesy deceit to your soul. Your sin remains a sin however weak your nature may be. When you plead weakness, you are but pleading what may be pleaded equally well by the thief or the murderer. There is no sin which has not that palliation. Granted that God will love you in spite of sin, yet that proves rather the greatness than the smallness of the sin, inasmuch as it was done against such love. God's tenderness ought to make you feel more keenly. God's forgiveness, if you have a heart, ought to make your sin more grievous to yourself. Do not blunt your conscience by that which proves the infinity of God's mercy. Do not turn kindness into evil. Do not make the messages of love arguments for disobedience. Surely that must be a base nature which takes advantage of a readiness to forgive, and thinks lightly of a sin against love because that love will be sure to love on in spite of it.

The same kind of danger besets us when we are looking forward. We are tempted, because we know that God will be tender to our weakness, to relax our efforts. We say not, 'We will obey,' but, 'We will try to obey;' a phrase which may mean humility, but which too often means feebleness of purpose. Weakness is sin. However tenderly it will be dealt with, it is still sin. To count upon it, to take all the strength out of our Christian purpose beforehand by pleading to ourselves that we are weak, and therefore it is no harm if our resolutions are weak to correspond, is folly added to the sin. The sheep that wanders will be sought out and brought back, but what are we to think of the sheep that,

having been told of this, therefore wanders on purpose? The prodigal son will be welcomed when he returns. But what madness if he therefore went out the sooner, and wandered further, and stayed away longer! 'We are not under the law,' says St. Paul, 'but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?' Because God's love is great and makes allowance for our weakness, shall we therefore take no heed to keep ourselves from evil? Now very few indeed, I suppose, distinctly set this before them, and say, 'I can repent some day, and therefore I need not care about doing right now.' But by no means very few of us allow our endeavours towards pleasing God to be very feeble because we know beforehand our own weakness and God's goodness to it. The fact is that we can do much more than we do. It is not weakness at all, but want of all real effort, which is the true cause of nine failures out of ten. We can be absolutely masters of far the largest part of our conduct. Thoughts, feelings, sudden impulses, acts into which we slip unawares, sins of surprise, sins of forgetfulness, these may in some degree fall within the dominion of weakness. But the regular discharge of regular duties, the government of the tongue, the general character of the conduct, the deliberate choice of the will —to say that when we go wrong here we go wrong from weakness, is a mere abuse of language. Here when we fail, we fail because we are not really trying, and to plead weakness is to delude ourselves.

But perhaps the most mischievous of all these perversions of the doctrine of God's allowance for human

weakness is that which lowers the standard of all human excellence, puts good and bad nearly on a level, finds little difference between the saint and the worldling, beats down or sneers down all high aims, calls aspirations after purity and unselfishness and justice folly, denies the vital distinction between the man who is trying to serve God and the man who is not. There is one place where the difference between the good man and the bad man is hidden out of sight, and that is when both are kneeling at the foot of the Cross. But till men are brought there in repentance, the gulf which separates the desire to serve God from the disregard of His will, is as wide as from heaven to hell. Nor can we do a greater mischief to our consciences than by trying to teach them that because we are weak therefore all Christian goodness is worth nothing, and there is little to choose between living one way and living the other way. On the contrary, weak as we are we are expressly told that our goodness is in kind the same as our Lord's. 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.' The little good of which we are capable is for all that in its nature heavenly, and comes directly from the other world. Our weakness may make us incapable of attaining much of it: and our want of earnestness may rob us of still more. But still in its kind it is of heaven and not of earth, and nothing on earth can be compared with it in value. We cannot be as true and just and unselfish as we should be; and we are not as true and just and unselfish as we can be; but for all that, what truth and justice and unselfishness there is upon earth is of the

same priceless heavenly quality as shall be found in the other world.

To conclude, this doctrine, like not a few others, can be used for good and for ill. It is true, however we use it. No folly or baseness of man in perverting either its meaning or its purpose shall make it untrue. But its being true will not make it incapable of being misused. And its use must be determined by the rule by which the use of every other truth is determined; that is, by the aid which it can give towards bringing us near to God. Think of it as proving God's love, and it will comfort you when you feel that you have offended Him, and will help you to repent. Think of it as proving your need of God's aid, and it will help you to cling closely to Him and depend on His strength; it will be with your prayers and with your resolutions. Think of it as proving your weakness, and it will be a safeguard against running into temptation, and against pride. But it may lower the whole tone of your character if you allow yourself to use it as a palliation of your faults, or as an excuse for absence of downright effort. When you use it so, it becomes inapplicable. He cannot be called smoking flax who is capable of counting God's tenderness to sinners as an argument for continuing in sin, or who serves our Lord less faithfully because he knows that He is an indulgent master. Such an one may assure himself at once that his love is not weak; he has no love at all. Weakness is admissible when you have done all that you can; not before. Serve God with all your strength; try earnestly to do His will as if you loved it; come to

Him in real sorrow for past faults, and in firm resolution to sin in that way no more; you will still find, in spite of all that you can do, that you need the allowance which God makes for weakness; and you may feel quite sure that you will get it; but short of that I know not how you can feel sure. For it is a fearful sin to make His love a reason for persisting in evil.

May 24, 1863.

SERMON XVI.

GOD GREATER THAN OUR HEARTS.

1 JOHN iii. 20, 21.

'*If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*'

WE cannot always stand upright. Lapse of time only convinces us more and more that our nature is so weak that faultlessness is out of our reach. While we are young it very often seems as if we were on the verge of attaining, if not a state of freedom from faults, yet at any rate a state in which faults would come at rare intervals, in which we should on the whole be right before our own consciences, although now and then we might slip into very serious lapses. We never attain to this. But it often seems not far off. Furthermore, while we are young we enjoy this blessing which in after years we would give much to recover, that repentance seems to cleanse the character. We do wrong, we are sorry; and if we can but keep away from the wrong for the future, it seems to leave no stain behind it. A man thinks very little of even very bad faults which he committed when quite

a boy, if only he has never committed them since. The character seems to grow out of them. The conscience seems to be no longer responsible for them. We look back on them as if they belonged to some one else. All this is the privilege of early youth. As time goes on we learn our weakness. That bright day of rest from the inner battle seems to flee further and further away. Some of us attain indeed to the rest of the soldier on guard, who is not called upon to fight, but is called upon to be always on the watch. Others are required to do more: they have to go on fighting and not merely watching, and it often seems as much as ever they can do to hold their ground and not be driven into a surrender of all true effort. Anyhow, we learn that the happy state of joyous undisturbed service of God, of which perhaps we may have dreamed, is not given, or is very rarely given, to any one on this side of the grave. Sins turn out to be much more deeply rooted than we thought. Duties turn out to be harder. We feel as if we *could* serve God in one way, and, behold, we are called to serve Him in another, and that other does not suit us. We are called on to make sacrifices, but the particular sacrifice demanded is not the sacrifice that we feel most ready to make. Somehow or other, be it our fault, be it the fault of our circumstances, we do not find, or we very seldom find, that we can live quite the life that we hoped to live before God and our own consciences. And, meanwhile, the faults into which we fall seem to be more hurtful to our own characters. Wrong is not so easily

wiped off. The stain is deeper. Repentance cannot do so much for us as it could. The buoyancy of youth finds a place even in religion. When the buoyancy of youth is gone there is not the same elastic spring, not the same happy thoughtlessness, not the same belief in our own strength, not the same sanguine hope. Our ideals very often seem further off instead of nearer. We are not what we meant to be: far enough from it perhaps. And we begin to doubt whether we ever shall be.

But through all this there is, nevertheless, ever growing up within the Christian soul a deeper and firmer assurance that we are in God's hands, and that He has us fast. Through faults and through the punishment which follows them, through failures to reach what we aimed at in God's service, through humiliating confessions that we are sometimes forced to make ourselves, through the painful acknowledgment that even where we thought ourselves strong there we have been beaten, through the gathering conviction that we have little chance now of attaining our early visions, through the experience of deep stains on the character, yet nevertheless will grow the certainty, that weak and poor as our hearts may be, worthless as the offering of our lives may and must appear to God, yet He is more than ever our Father; and if to think of ourselves is always painful, to think of Him is always a comfort.

'God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.' This must always be a very solemn thought: it may be also a great help and stay; it may be a very serious

warning. Which of these it shall be depends, according to the Apostle, on the answer to the question, Do our hearts condemn us? What is meant by this? We need only to look back a few verses and we shall see. St. John is speaking of love. If we would know what love means, he bids us look at the great example of Divine love; how He laid down His life for us. And then he presses on us the warning that naturally follows: 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue: but in deed and in truth.' And then he promises what will be the true and sure reward of that love. 'Hereby,' he says, that is, by this love, 'we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.' Confident trust is the consequence and the reward of love. Love, and you will trust. Love in deed and in truth, and you feel certain of His love. How shall you know whether you love? Ask your own heart. Put it to yourself whether your service is lip-service, or whether it is real though imperfect. The question is not whether you have not many faults, whether you have not sinned many times; but whether your love is honest; whether, in the secret shrine of your own heart, the spirit that judges all you do can honestly say that however wrong you have gone you have never really deserted your Master's colours, you have never given up the hope and wish to attain to nobleness and excellence of life. If your heart, though humbly, though with confession of grievous falls, though almost shrinking away from its own verdict, yet shall say that you still are really on God's side, on the side

of the unselfish, the true, and the pure, then you will have confidence towards God. Then the fact that God is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things, means this; that He knows and allows for your weakness; that if He punishes you He will punish you in mercy, and make the punishment a double blessing, because He knows what is good for you; that if He seems to hide His face, yet even that is a token of His love, because He knows that it is expedient for you that He should go away. It means that though you have failed to make your character what you had intended, He has you in His hands, and will make you what He will. It means that even your failures He can turn to your profit, for He knoweth more about you than you can know about yourself. It means that the less strong you feel the more strong will His arm be; the more severe temptations seem, the firmer will be His hold on you to keep them from carrying you away.

But the fact that God is greater than the heart and knoweth all things, means just the opposite to those whose hearts condemn them. No conviction of God's overflowing goodness, no certainty of His knowledge of all human weakness, can give any confidence to the man whose own heart condemns him of not making any honest effort, of not really wishing or struggling to serve God; of not having any genuine love either of God or of his fellow-men within him. God is merciful. God will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss, for if He were, who could abide it? God's love is in-

exhaustible, and He will not be severe on His creatures. Such thoughts as these come into the mind of those who do not really belong to God, who do not honestly endeavour to serve Him, who have no heavenly aspirations. But they cannot give confidence to the soul, nor can we by their aid assure our hearts before our Judge. Faults, even grievous faults, may make us very sorry, and yet not keep us away from our Master. But nothing can bring us to Him, nothing can give us confidence in His presence, if our hearts condemn us of not being His at all.

The growing assurance that God's mercy holds us fast, that assurance of His love which makes repentance always possible, and teaches us to tell Him what we have done wrong as a good child would tell its mother, that sense of being His property which takes away all fear, even though it adds tenfold to the shame and grief with which we think of our own many faults, that belongs to those whose hearts do not condemn them of being faithless to their service.

So, then, as life goes on we for the most part both lose and gain. We lose much of the eagerness of our hope, much of the brightness of our visions of life. If we have looked forward to excellence of character, and what young Christian has not? if we have promised ourselves conquests over selfishness, and over temper, and over passion, and over falseness, and over unfairness, and what young soldier of the Cross has not gained such victories in some degree already and felt confident that he would soon have these enemies under

his feet? and if we have looked forward to doing good work amongst our fellows and winning their approval as well as the approval of our own conscience, all this belongs to youth, and most certainly the more we can keep it on to the end the better; for all this gives energy and spring to the Christian course. But much of it will assuredly fade away out of our visions. And what then shall take its place but the assurance of God's strength instead of our own strength, of God's fighting for us instead of fighting for ourselves, of God's upholding hand just when nothing else can uphold us any longer? This, too, should already be growing in the young Christian's soul, for the day will certainly come when he will find nothing else to lean upon. Already in youth is the question put to us, Doth our heart condemn us? Make all allowance for faults of every kind; faults of surprise, of weakness, of impulse, of weariness; faults of blindness and half-enlightenment; faults of nature not yet subdued; make all allowance for all these, but still does the heart condemn? At the very moment when the question is put, is your will on the right side? do you really belong to those who would have the right prevail? do you honestly wish for the absolute triumph of the good and the just and the holy? are you, with all your faults, a soldier in that cause? For that alone can make you feel that you belong to God. And if you belong to God, whatever else may fail you, when high hopes have come down, and your aim perhaps is not lowered because you cannot think it right to lower it, yet the attainment of it seems gone

far away, when you are surprised at your own slow progress, and cannot be as high-minded, as generous, as just, as strictly true in word and deed and thought, as absolutely pure as you hoped to be, the sense that you belong to God, and that He knows it, will give you even yet fresh strength, and a more dogged determination, and at the last many an unexpected victory; but above all, a new desire swallowing up by degrees all other desires whatever, to be God's servant and nothing else; for nothing else is it worth our toil to strive to be.

June 21, 1868.

SERMON XVII.

THE DRUDGERY OF LIFE.

ISAIAH xxviii. 9, 10.

'*Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.*'

THIS is the complaint which the hearers of Isaiah made of his teaching. His teaching was commonplace, dull, fit only for little children; it contained nothing new, or striking, or profound, or original; it gave the learner no sense of evident progress; it was too easy; it went over the same ground incessantly; it repeated over and over again truths which were fit only for children, for very little children; his hearers were perpetually tempted to say, I know all that already. Surely a great prophet ought to teach something new and startling; ought to impress the imagination; ought to stir the depths of the soul. But Isaiah was perpetually reiterating his protest against covetousness, and drunkenness, and injustice, and forgetfulness of God, all of them sins against which men's consciences warned them

already. His hearers did not feel that they were advancing, that their knowledge of spiritual things was growing, that they had a deeper and wider and clearer insight. How could he pretend to be a prophet?

This complaint, we may be sure, was not a new one; and even now it is not an old one. In all God's teaching of us we shall find the same characteristic. There are no doubt times when we seem to receive a flood of unexpected light. But ordinarily it is not so. Our perception of God's truth, our strength in God's service, our mastery over ourselves, our conviction of God's inexhaustible love, grows slowly, imperceptibly, unaccountably, just as our bodies grow, just as our understandings grow. It is not God's way in our spiritual education to lead us forward through a perpetual succession of striking novelties. It is not His way to keep our imaginations always alert; to stir us with frequent excitements; to make religion always interesting; to surround His service with the attraction of being always visibly great, noble, and marvellous. On the contrary, we are repeatedly warned in the New Testament that one of the temptations which we are to expect is the temptation to be weary. 'Let us not be weary in well-doing,' says St. Paul to the Galatians, 'for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.' And again to the Thessalonians, 'Brethren, be not weary in well-doing.' So in the Epistle to the Hebrews we are bidden to 'consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.' And so our Lord tells us that 'he that shall endure unto the

end the same shall be saved;' and again, 'In your patience possess ye your souls.' What is it that makes us need this warning against weariness? It is that we shall certainly find, and very often find, that one of the trials by which it pleases God to try His servants is that sometimes they obey Him, and seem to obey Him in vain; that they endeavour to come near Him by obedience, by prayer, by study, even by the Holy Communion, and yet seem to get no nearer; that they fight hard with their faults and do not seem to conquer them; and as their spiritual strength and warmth seems to get no greater, so neither does their spiritual light; they do not seem to know more of His ways and of His truth than they did; they do not seem to have deeper insight or a wider range. In short, the service of God seems sometimes to be dull: and yet surely of all things it ought to be most full of life, and interest, and perpetual novelty, and high-wrought feeling; nay, even heavenly ecstasy would seem to be more appropriate to such a service. But whatever may be our expectations, it is quite certain that God does permit His service sometimes to seem dull and uninteresting, so that we are tempted to become quite weary of it. Why cannot we always have the aid of high imaginations, of striking doctrines, of trials with something grand and noble in them, of that secret sense of doing what we ourselves admire which gives value even to trifles and lights up all the life? Perhaps this question cannot be answered. But at any rate so much can be said, that it is not God's way of teaching to make His service always interesting,

and that whether or not we are able to tell why it should not be so, we cannot too soon accept it as certain that it will not be so.

It is a real help in such a temptation to recognise that this trial is not a special one besetting us, and seeming therefore to imply a peculiar sin or peculiar weakness, but a regular ordinance of God's providence to be expected, to be submitted to, to be accepted, to be used just like all other similar ordinances. And in some cases it is not only a help; it is a comfort also. For sometimes when we find God's service dull we begin not unnaturally to fear that this must prove some special and peculiar coldness or hardness in our hearts. It need not imply anything of the kind. It may be no more than part of the course of God's instruction. We have to learn to serve Him when our hearts are dull, as well as when our hearts are eager; when His service has about it something attractive, and when it has nothing.

But it may perhaps help us still further if we notice that this ordinance of God does not apply to spiritual lessons or spiritual learning only, but to all lessons, and all learning, and all work; that the great proportion is always what, taken by itself, would rightly be called drudgery. What is the difference that distinguishes the musician or the painter from the mere amateur? What is it but the long-continued discipline of hand, of ear, of eye which has made all the faculties of body and mind subservient to the purposes of the art? The man who has received no such training may have to begin

with the same natural faculties, the same genius, the same inspiration; but they are not cultivated, and they have no command over the only means by which their fine conceptions can be expressed. And what is the cultivation which such genius always needs? It needs unwearied labour at what to another man would seem the drudgery of the art, what only ceases to be drudgery because the light of genius is always present in every trifling act. Nothing can be a greater mistake than to suppose that genius dispenses with labour. What genius will do is to inspire the soul with a power to persevere in the labour that is needed; but the greatest geniuses in every art invariably labour at their art far more than all others, because their genius shows them the value of such patient labour and aids them to persist in it. So, again, in public life, nothing would be a greater mistake than to suppose that a great statesman required no painful toiling over details in order to govern well, and that it was by flashes of intuition and the force of genius penetrating without any study into the truth of facts that he knew what to do. The fact is, that whenever such a man sees more deeply at the moment than another man, it is because previous study and thought have given him their results to use, and he only needs less study now because he has given to the same subject much more and more painful study before. No man really achieves anything permanent or truly great who has not both studied, and thought, and laboured much at all the details of the needful knowledge. Or if we turn from the statesman who legislates to the statesman

who administers the law, the same rule holds. There is no such thing in true government as making general rules and leaving them as it were to execute themselves. Their operations will be totally different to what you mean unless you are diligent in seeing to their working in detail.

The rule holds good in every single occupation, nay, in every single amusement of life. The experience of any school will supply illustrations in abundance. It is the loving labour at his own tasks which makes a man a thorough scholar. It is incessant practice which makes a man skilful at a game. And much of this practice even at games would be dull enough if it were not perpetually encouraged by the hope of achieving a triumph by-and-by.

And why is all this? Apparently because our nature is so framed that in this way only can any kind of knowledge or skill or art or faculty, or whatever else we may call that which enables us to do what we wish to do really well, be so worked into us as to be completely ours. To see how to do a thing is not enough. The power of really doing it implies that the needful science or skill shall have penetrated us through and through until we do instinctively, almost mechanically, all that is needed for the purpose; until the little trifles which are so hard always to attend to and which are so absolutely necessary to true success cease to demand attention, because indeed it would require an effort not to do them; until in all trivial matters we do the right thing as unconsciously, as instantaneously, as we put

out our hands to break our fall whenever our foot slips under us as we walk. In actual life, the proportion of what is grand and large and striking, to what is petty and matter of detail, is always exceedingly small. And it is because we learn the one kind of lesson quickly and the other very slowly. Quickly, as it were by a flash, do we see a new truth; slowly, by long-continued practice, by many many failures, through weariness sometimes tempting to give up the pursuit, through dulness which seems to dim the brightness that first inspired our souls, do we make this same truth a real part of our being.

This law then which seems to pervade all our life by God's will enters also into our religious life. Much of our religious life, if it is to be really good, must have this character of being incessant practice of what we already know well. We have to practise our duty until on all ordinary occasions it becomes quite instinctive; until on all ordinary occasions we do, almost without thinking what we are doing, the precise thing that is truest, and kindest, and justest, and purest, and most unselfish. Great temptations will sometimes beset us and will require something more than mere mechanical instinct to resist them. But we ought to be so trained in serving our Lord that all ordinary temptations shall be put aside mechanically without any effort at all. How beautiful is such a character when you see it! How beautiful it is to see a man go straight, as it were without a thought, to the right thing! It is excellent to overpower a temptation, and being summoned to a battle to fight it through, and though much tempted

yet to prevail by God's help. It is excellent to beat down the vain impulse or the cowardly impulse and speak the exact truth, even if there have been hesitation first and a visible weakness. It is excellent to resist the angry feeling that rises from within, and hold it in check and at last subdue it. It is excellent to turn from pleasure to duty, even if the eyes have half unwittingly turned back to gaze at what is left behind. But there is a peculiar beauty about the instantaneous instinctive obedience to God's law which seems to make all battle unnecessary because the first impulse of the soul is to do precisely what ought to be done. Such goodness seems as it were to go right through all the nature, not to be put on outside like a garment which some strange emergency might any day strip off. Nor is it only more beautiful than any other character. To such a man, and to such an one alone, is revealed in its fullest sense the true nature of spiritual light and spiritual life. In spite of all that we say and think and read to the contrary, we perpetually measure good and evil by their consequences, not by themselves. He only who has made his goodness instinctive, thoroughly appreciates what we all of us say and fancy that we know, that the good of a good deed is the doing of it; and that consequently there is no real distinction between great and small, between important and unimportant; the goodness of doing right is not in its greatness or in its importance, but in itself; and he who loves the true spiritual life will recognise its presence in the most trifling acts of obedience to God as much as in the most devoted service.

It is for this that God is training us. And if we are ever inclined to call His service a tame or a dull or a wearisome life, let us remember that here we are practising the lessons by which we are to be fashioned to His pattern. Through this weariness and dulness, if we ever find God's law weary or dull, we drink into our souls the transforming power of His spiritual teaching. This will give to our obedience the readiness, the freedom, the thoroughness which is always necessary in all good work. This will crown us at last with that beauty of perfect goodness which we cannot but delight in. This it is that often gives to aged Christians that marvellous charm of heavenliness in every word and look and gesture, that seems almost unapproachable to younger souls. This it is which often shines through a man's character in later years, and makes us wonder at the quiet change which has made his life so saintly. This is surely one of the most excellent and beautiful of all crowns to wear before we quit this life for the other. What weariness or what dulness would not be paid, and overpaid, if we could at last attain to such purity and such truth of soul?

July 19, 1868.

SERMON XVIII.

THE AIMS OF LIFE.

2 TIMOTHY iv. 7.

'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.'

TO be able to say this, or something corresponding to this, on his death-bed, must be the aim of every real Christian. It is true that these words are said by an Apostle, and all men cannot be Apostles; and a Christian might be tempted to say, 'This aim was the right one for him, but it is too high for me.' But St. Paul is not here speaking in the character of an Apostle but of a disciple. He says nothing of his labours, of the Churches that he had founded, of the unbelievers whom he had converted. There is nothing here to recall the words of many years before, 'I laboured more abundantly than they all.' He only expresses that assured confidence in God's acceptance of him which belonged to the near approach of death. He speaks as a servant of the Lord, but in no other sense a servant than is every one of us. Yet again, it may be said, if he does not speak as an Apostle, yet still he was a saint. No ordinary Christian can adopt the words or appropriate the aim of one who saw our Lord

by special revelation. Grant this, and yet remember that this very saint who is now so assured when the grave is close at hand, had confessed in the course of his laborious service, that he found it necessary to keep under his body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway. He avowed that it was a principle of his life not to stand still, not to count himself to have apprehended, but to be always pressing forward; and in making this profession he does not by any means speak in an assured tone, but declares that he does it all, 'if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead.' He had his struggles; and though the great conflict in his soul was over long before the date of any writing of his that has come to us, yet still, till almost the end, in some shape or other, the battle lasted. And when the fight is pronounced to be over, it is coupled with the words, 'The time of my departure is at hand.' There is nothing here altogether removed from the experience of ordinary Christians. Nothing that makes the case exceptional, or that Christians of whatever degree cannot find in it a rule for themselves. It may be true that few shall be able to say at last quite what St. Paul says. But most certainly the aim is not put beyond the sight of any one, and something corresponding to the same final result is within our reach. Granted that most men will have good reason at the last to think of many faults yet unsubdued, of victories yet unattained, of the need of much mercy; granted that to all else we must add 'Simply to Thy Cross I cling;' yet no Christian

at the last ought to be unable—nay, no Christian who can be called by the name at all, will be unable—to say, 'I have fought and have not given up the fight, I have run and am still running the course, I have kept and still hold fast the faith.'

Now, it is good to have this much before our minds, and for this reason. We cannot help sometimes looking forward, and in youth we cannot help doing it often. We cannot help having aims towards which we direct our life, some with greater, some with less resoluteness, but all with enough consistency to give a kind of character to our whole course. We cannot help having wishes for the future, pictures of what we should like eventually to do and be. This, no doubt, is strongest in youth, especially at the point where youth verges on manhood. In after years we are more ready to acquiesce, to live in the present moment; perhaps we find it happiest and best to look neither backward to the past nor forward to the future, but rather, if possible, upward. Yet even then the future will come in, and how it comes in, and, in as far as it does come in, what we allow it to offer us, becomes more important than ever.

We look forward to the future, to the future that is before us here in this present life. And by God's appointment, and according to the fashion in which He has made us, we look forward, and we are allowed to look forward, to more than one object in life.

We look forward to a life of enjoyment. This is the simplest and first and most natural of our anticipations. And it does not require that we should look forward

very far. The enjoyment that we hope for to-morrow fills the thought of to-day. The pleasure that we expect next week gives a share of its delight to this. But of course, though we need not look farther on, we sometimes do. We look forward a year hence, a few years hence. We fancy how we shall enjoy ourselves in this way, and what delight we shall get in that way; how delightful it will be to be more entirely masters of ourselves and our time and our employments; or again, to take our own line, and work in our own fashion; or again, to see much society, and enjoy the company of friends; or, perhaps, again, when we are older, to rest from hard work, and not feel the incessant pressure of labour. All this is natural and right. Nay, in as far as such anticipations make us cheerful in our duties, and pleasant to our fellows, and sweet in temper, and childlike in our thoughts of God our Father who gives all enjoyment whatever, all this is in its place and excellent. But when we have said so much, it is impossible not to add that the very description of such anticipations and hopes as these is enough to show that they are not sufficient to satisfy the whole of our nature. These are all fitting in their place. But we cannot live in these alone. To think of enjoyment is well, but to think of nothing but enjoyment is not well. Nay, to think of enjoyment first, to make it the principal aim, to subordinate our life to our own pleasure, is not what will content our whole being. We must have something more than this to aim at. We must put something else higher. If we do not, we inevitably suffer in our own estimation; we lose self-respect; we

feel something like self-contempt. And as time goes on, this feeling becomes stronger unless we can stifle it by becoming utterly worldly.

Well, then, we may aim at something better, or if not better in every way, yet at any rate higher, less merely selfish, not so low in the scale; something that shall require effort and toil; something that shall command the respect of others. So, then, we aim at fame and reputation; at power and authority; at a leading place among our fellows; or, what is far better than all these, at doing honest and valuable service. These aims are no doubt somewhat higher in the scale than the anticipation of enjoyment: the last of them,—the desire to serve God and our fellow men, and to produce some real results in that service; the desire to do something for our fellows really well, better perhaps than most others could have done it; the desire to find out some work that really suits us, and to labour at it heartily;—this kind of ambition undeniably is implanted in us by the God who made us, and has in it much that is excellent. It has its dangers. It is very often closely allied to mere personal love of distinction: very often to mere liking to have our own way; very often to vanity; very often to pride; very often to self-will. It has temptations peculiar to itself. It tempts men to forget what it is that gives value to the very service that they are rendering. It tempts men to short cuts to their ends, doing a little evil in order to get, as they fancy, great good. It sometimes leads men back by a roundabout road to mere selfishness. They begin by seeking power and

reputation and a leading place in order to serve their fellows, but end by desiring all these things for their own sakes, so that the service which ought to be the chief aim becomes secondary to what ought only to be the means. And even at the very best, conscience will for ever repeat the warning that no service is true service which does not consecrate the man himself, and make him more the servant of God than he was before. 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.' This is the warning that must be rung in the ears of those who wish to give God and their fellow-creatures the service of their lives, but at the same time to pay no heed to the characters of their own hearts.

What, then, must accompany all other aims in life? What but the desire to be able at the last to say that to the very uttermost of our power we have lifted up our own souls nearer to the God who gave them? The man who finds out his weaknesses and resolutely sets himself to guard against the sins to which they lead, the man who finds out what is his chief temptation and deliberately, at the risk of losing much enjoyment, puts himself into a position where he cannot commit the sin to which he is tempted, the man who fights the battle with his temper till he has compelled it to obedience to his conscience, the man who braces up a cowardly spirit and compels himself to acquire true courage, the man who persists in mortifying his own vanity till he has

robbed it of strength, such a man does more true service both to God and to his fellows than he can do by years of labour. Nay, this inward lifting of the soul to a higher state God has made the first, the indispensable condition of the innocence and the excellence of all other aims whatever. You cannot look forward to innocent enjoyment, unless at the same time you look forward also to self-conquest. Still less can you look forward to doing anything worth doing for your fellow-creatures. You may seem to do much; but no law is more imperative in the spiritual world than the dictum of the old philosophers, that nothing can come of nothing. If your own heart is not honestly striving upwards, in vain, quite in vain will you labour to aid others to strive upwards. If you have no high aim for your own soul, nothing will make any work that you can do really good and sound.

And at the last, when the approach of death compels you to estimate all things by the measures, not of earth, but of heaven, nothing will enable you to value either enjoyment that you have had, or labour that you have done, apart from the spirit in which you have lived. Then you will not be able to hide from yourself any longer, even if you have hidden it till then, that to be able to look back on faults conquered for the love of Christ, on pride chastened and on selfishness cast out, on truth and simplicity gained, on thoughts purified, on love cherished, will be much more to you than if you can count up pleasures, and triumphs, and toils, and successes. Then you will see more clearly than ever

before, though to those who ask their consciences it is always clear, that to be is always more excellent than to do. Then will you find it easier to rest in Christ in proportion as for His love you have been purifying yourself even as He is pure.

This is the ambition of the Christian. He has other hopes and aims in their turn. He looks to enjoy what others enjoy. He hopes to be of use in proportion to his powers. But throughout all he remembers that God has given him to keep, and to discipline, and to purify, a soul of his own. And he hopes that when all other aims and ambitions have come to an end, this at least will still remain, the hope of proving his love to the very last by approaching all he can to the image of His Heavenly Father. And then the reward that is promised, and to which St. Paul was looking when he died, is that crown of righteousness which fitly closes the conflict, by giving what he has been asking all his life but could never attain in this present world. To feel that you really love God, to know that His grace has broken the bands of many sins which once seemed absolutely beyond all our strength, to know that avoidance of temptation has got rid of one, and steady perseverance has got rid of another, and a firm resolve at a happy moment has got rid of another, and that imperfect and weak and stained as your life is, yet still you are something nearer to our Lord than you were, no other reward of ambition shall be compared with this; for the thought of it knits the very soul to God.

October 4, 1868.

SERMON XIX.

LIGHT.

ST. JOHN viii. 32.

'And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'

THERE are two powers that chiefly fashion our characters, and through our characters our lives, and these two are the discipline which we undergo either from ourselves or from others or from circumstances, and the light wherewith God enlightens our souls. We live in the midst of our fellows, and we catch from them peculiar habits of action, of feeling, of thought. We live, as it were, in an atmosphere formed by circumstances and by society, and as we breathe this atmosphere we of necessity derive from it the peculiar character of life that belongs to it. We are under rules, and these rules mould us imperceptibly but surely to fit them. We make rules and laws for ourselves, and these rules and laws have the same effect as rules and laws which are made for us by external authority. We have conflicts within our own souls, and the conflict trains the soul, and sometimes seems almost

to make it afresh. All these influences act upon us in one way: they force us, as it were, sometimes slowly and almost imperceptibly, sometimes sharply and with much pain, into a fashion which we should not otherwise have worn. And the last of them, the inward conflict, has such a transforming power that the soldier of Christ who has really passed through it learns to look back on it as the time above almost all others which did most for him, whether for good or evil. All these influences act in one way. But this is not the only power that forms us; there is another power that acts in another way, and that is the power of clear insight, the power given by the light of truth whenever that light reaches the soul. Often in a man's course the turning-points, the great epochs, are marked by the first clear perception of a great truth. The thought flashing into the soul from no one can tell what source, the striking sentence read in a book, the striking expression heard in a sermon or in conversation, the new application of some old and well-known truth, these have sometimes seemed to change not our life so much as our very selves. Very often the result of seeing a truth which we never saw before is to make us feel as if we could never again be what we had been; we feel as if we might indeed do very much as before, live very much as before, show no visible outward change, and yet for all that be different, and be different henceforward always.

Now these two different powers which thus make the man are not separated from one another by any absolute division. The discipline of life is bound up with the

insight of the conscience, and each helps or hinders the other. Thus, for instance, it is certainly the case, and we can easily see why it should be the case, that to most men light is more often revealed in the time of self-conflict than at any other time. It is in battling with himself and his own inclinations that a man most often sees for the first time truths that he never saw before. Revelations and self-sacrifice are generally bound together. There are some truths that seem never to be fully revealed except to those who are engaged in this battle. But though there is this frequent connection between the power that works upon us and the power that works within us, yet the two powers are distinct. Great thoughts, clear sight, heavenly principles, these are quite distinct and work in quite a distinct manner from slowly-formed habit, from self-control acquired by discipline, from that excellent infection, as we may call it, that penetrates the soul from the spiritual atmosphere in which we live. And it is the light that really makes the man free.

It is the light, it is the possession of the truth that makes the man free. This light is necessary to crown all other inward gifts. I do not say that light is the highest gift; love is surely higher, and that humility which is the especial mark of love. But light is the gift that brings with it true freedom. Light is the gift that makes all other gifts have their fullest and best use. Even love needs light to do its work. How sad it is, yet how common, to see love without light; to see a loving heart, a truly childlike soul, a heart that clings to the Father of us all with all the affection of a warm-hearted child, yet for

want of light offering up a mistaken, a blind, a foolish service! How sad it is to see self-denial, that most excellent of all offerings, wasted on unfit purposes! How sad to see the blindness of mind shutting out the earthly child from the heavenly Father! How sad to see mistaken fears! and sadder still, and sometimes shocking, to see mistaken confidence! What is the history of most superstition, of all that part of superstition which has any good in it, but the history of love without light? And what mistakes have been made, and what mischief has been done by men who tried to serve God but knew not how! Fanaticism, perhaps, must not be called love without light: if the love were pure, it would surely save a man from that dreadful sin. But if not love without light, what is it but zeal without light? How large a part of the uncharitableness of mankind is really due to the want of light! The fact is, that there is no such bondage as darkness. The darkness that hides the truth more effectually robs the man of his real freedom than even his weakness and want of desire to have that freedom.

It is quite true that the truth does not make you free all at once. The light very often seems to do nothing but show you your chains. The result of seeing that you are not living as becomes a Christian is not always that you are instantly able to commence a new life. On the contrary, very often this is but the beginning of a new battle. You see that you are not unselfish enough: but that does not instantly crush your selfishness. You see that you are worldly, and that your aims are not

lofty enough; but that will not always make you unworldly. You suddenly see that God's law is something infinitely higher and holier than you thought, and that your soul ought to move ever in reverence for what so far transcends all that is on earth. But it may happen that you shall see this and wonder at the same time how little you are moved by seeing it.

But though the truth in that sense will not make you free, yet it is the true and the only true beginning of freedom. While you are blind you may have much in you that is good, but freedom you have not. It is when you see that you begin to be free: and because free therefore also responsible. As soon as you see, you fight a battle of a totally different sort. You fight with a certainty of victory if you will but persevere and trust; you fight with a perception of what you have to win; you fight with a perception of the true way to win. Till you see, much of your conflict must be beating the air; much of it must be wasted in compelling yourself to do what God does not really command; much of it may, perhaps, do mischief that you will afterwards regret. But when you see, your purpose becomes clearly defined. The battle may be harder than ever; but it has a clear issue, and your strength is doubled by that mere fact.

Now, how does the light come, and can we do anything to bring it?

The light of truth is, in some degree, like the light of heaven. It comes by God's ordinance for the most part, and not wholly by man's seeking. The pearl of great price was found by the man who was seeking goodly

pearls. He sought for truth, and he found in the course of his search the one truth of all. But the treasure hid in a field was found by one who was not seeking at all. The truth was given in the course of God's Providence, and looked as if it came by chance. No man can be certain of finding the great truth which shall light up his own individual life in a particular way, or at a particular time. All that can be said is, that to this case emphatically the promise applies, 'He that seeketh findeth.'

In other words, the first condition of finding the truth that you need is that you shall wish to find it. And this is by no means a universal wish. It is by no means the case that every one wishes to see the truth. Some men are yet in the dark because the light of heaven has not yet shone upon them. But some men are in the dark even when the light of heaven is blazing on them full, because the light that is in them, that is, their eye, is dark. They are in the light, but their eyes are shut. They do not want to know the truth. Nay, very often they would rather not know the truth. Is this uncommon? Is it uncommon for us to have a suspicion that all is not right, and yet be unwilling to look steadily and see what it is that is wrong? Is it uncommon to have secret questions in the soul, and to turn away from them lest looking into them should tell us what we would rather not know? Is it uncommon to feel that we are disobeying, or that we are unworthy of our name, or that we are meant for something better than we have yet attained, or that some sacrifice is required of us, and yet to be unwilling to look too narrowly lest the result should be to

demand from us what we are unwilling to give? Is it uncommon to fear that our opinions and beliefs will not bear examination, and yet to refuse to examine them because we cannot bear to give them up? The fact is, that the desire to see the light precisely as it is, is a very rare desire, and most men will have to confess that it costs them a struggle to be always honestly willing to see whatever God shall think fit to show. I know, of course, that many a man will say, 'I do not want to look into many things, because I cannot trust my own powers of intellect, and, as far as opinions go, I do not profess to be always able to defend them.' And this answer is a perfectly fair answer, as far as it goes, and must be instantly admitted. But is this all? Is there no more unwillingness than is covered by this account of it? Is there no fear of being asked to live by too high a standard? no fear of being required to give up something which we really know to be wrong, but cannot bear to surrender? Is there no tendency to regard the conscience as a sleeping enemy whose slumbers we had better not disturb? Where there is anything of this kind it cannot be said that we are honestly desirous of seeing the truth.

To desire the truth is the beginning. I might almost call it the end as well. The desire, if it is genuine, will inevitably teach a man the true road to follow. For the genuine desire to see and hold the truth is bound up with the longing for excellence which our Lord calls the hunger and thirst after righteousness. 'If any man willeth to do God's will,' our Lord says, 'he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.' To desire to see the

truth is one condition of seeing it: to will to do God's will is the other. The truth is revealed to those who are straining towards their Father in heaven. Heavenly aspirations, earnest desire for goodness, the face turned towards Christ, the desire ever to live by whatever within you is highest and best, the willing obedience to your own best thoughts, the cheerful, the glad resolution to do whatever shall seem to you kindest, truest, justest, purest, noblest, that is the life which opens the eyes, and, whenever God reveals any part of the excellence of His holiness, as He will assuredly reveal it to each man in fitting time, that is the life which catches the light, and that is the man whom the truth conducts to perfect freedom. Straight forward shall he walk one day with no uncertain step; knowing the end to which God has called him; seeing his way, and hearing his Father's voice; forgetting everything else, and pressing to the mark which his Father has set full before his sight.

October 11, 1868.

SERMON XX.

READY SERVICE.

PSALM cxix. 60.

'I made haste, and prolonged not the time to keep Thy commandments.'

IT is very often really hard not only to do what is right, but to do it at the very time when it ought to be done. And with good reason does the writer of this Psalm set this before us as a special mark of real service. I do not mean, of course, that all service which hangs behind its due time is unreal. Very many men who drop back, and hesitate, and cannot bring themselves to do at once what they know perfectly well they must do at last, very many who seem incapable of immediate obedience to conscience, yet in the end invariably do the right thing. And in all our dealings with each other we must, if we mean to be just, recognise this fact, and give each other time. To many men it is much harder to do right as soon as they ought, than to do it as thoroughly, as completely, as unselfishly, as devotedly as they ought. It is not at all uncommon to find in men a need for time to bring themselves up to the point of

action, and yet when that point has been reached to see an absolute sacrifice of everything to duty. And not only is this the case with many, but it may be, if we take in the whole round of Christian life, the case with almost all. For those who are instant in some ways lag behind in others. Some men need time to bring themselves to exertion; some men need time to compel themselves to be open and true; some men need time to learn due control of their temper; some men need time to subdue their pride. In different ways men feel this need, and few Christians who look into themselves closely will not find that they are far from perfect on this score; not even are those perfect in this very respect whose natural quickness of decision tempts them to be somewhat impatient when they see their fellows hesitating and dallying about a plain duty. But although we are bound to recognise all this, and therefore to make allowance for each other in all our mutual dealings, and although we can feel quite sure that God also will make allowance for this weakness in His creatures, yet it remains nevertheless true that to be ready and instant in our obedience is a Christian excellence which every one is bound to do his utmost to attain. It is a mark of simplicity and thoroughness in our service; it is akin to the warmth of true loyalty; it has special rewards, and achieves a special success. Every Christian is bound to aim not only at making himself obedient to the call of duty, but readily, instantly obedient.

It is worth while to look at this more in detail. For as there are some cases where readiness in obedience is an

excellence and want of readiness is weakness, so there are other cases in which readiness is a downright duty, and want of readiness, whatever allowance we may make for it, still a sin.

I call that readiness a weakness which puts off duty, not so as to leave it in any sense undone, but so as to rob it of grace. There is all the difference in the world between the beauty of that obedience which, like a little child running to do something for its mother, seems to find a positive pleasure in the sense of obeying, and of that obedience which comes unwillingly and slowly to the point, and seems as if it meant to do no more than it absolutely must. I am not saying that the quick obedience always is better than the slow. I do not say that quickness is everything. The reluctant service which shows a resolute will not to be turned aside from a right purpose by any degree of its own reluctance, is perhaps in many cases the better service. The man who, in spite of great inward difficulty, yet compels himself to do right, may very possibly be rendering a surer and nobler service than the man of a more facile nature, who lightly does each duty as it comes, and seems to have very little effort in doing so. But though the reluctant service may, for all that men can see, be the more real service, it is not the more beautiful. It is not the service which makes other men's service easier. It is not the service which sheds a kind of charm round true obedience, and unconsciously teaches 'the beauty of holiness.' Slowness, reluctance, hesitation, these most certainly spoil the service, and hurt its usefulness very much indeed. If you are real, if you

make God's law your guide, if you wish to do right, and not only wish but try to do it, then add to this a resolute endeavour to be ready, to obey your conscience quickly, to leave no unfulfilled duty hanging over you like a burden, to postpone nothing to another time that you ought to do at this time.

For you will find that in many cases, in most cases, the delay, so far from making your duty easier, makes it harder. You put it off either till you cannot put it off any longer, or in the fancy that you will find yourself in a better mood for it. And most often when you set to work you see quite plainly that your delay has gained you nothing, and that you might just as well have done it at once. You have added to all that you have to carry the burden of something that ought to be done and yet is not done, and you know full well that you cannot afford to add anything at all to what you have to do.

But I go on to the want of readiness which not merely puts off a duty for a little time, and means nevertheless to do it, and actually does it, though it may be later than is wise, to that want of readiness which puts off indefinitely: the want of readiness, for instance, which is akin to the conduct of the good young man who, though quite in earnest in his desire to serve God, yet could not bring himself to pay the price required of him. 'Go and sell all that thou hast, and give unto the poor, and come follow Me,' was the command; and 'he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.' Something akin to him is the temper and spirit that sometimes possesses us

when we see that in some way or other we are not fighting a true battle, we are not rendering due service, we are not living up to our own ideal, we are meant for a better life and a better way of going on than that in which we now indulge. Then we feel very unhappy, and we think that we will make a turn presently; when we can get a good opportunity; when we have got out of present entanglements; when we are a little older; perhaps when we are in a fitter temper. This postponement, this prolonging of the time to keep God's commandments, does not mean that we are in reality not desiring to serve God at all. It does not mean that what we do of right is mere hypocrisy: our service is not false; but it is shallow. And such postponement as this, what can we call it but a sin? This at any rate is certain, that we gain nothing by it; that obedience does not become easier but harder afterwards; and that we assuredly have to undergo much discipline before we have the same opportunity again.

But once more, there is a postponement which is positively wrong, and the temptation to which we are bound to resist with all our strength. For it often happens that, weak as we are, we do wrong of a kind which we have in some degree to set right. There are faults which we are bound to confess. There are faults for which we are bound to beg the pardon of those who have been hurt by them. There are faults which we are bound to repair. There are faults which not only ought to be punished, but which we are bound to submit for punishment, and not to wait till the punishment reaches

us of itself. If you have misled a person, you are in many cases bound to correct your mistake, however much it may cost you. If you have given just cause for anger, you are bound to beg pardon. If you have neglected a duty to another, you are bound to correct your neglect. If you have been untrue, you are bound at all hazards and at all costs to confess the truth. Now in all these cases there is a great temptation to put off doing what ought to be done; and this putting off is in itself a sin; every moment of delay is an added sin; by delaying you stay as it were in the sin instead of getting out of it, and it does very real mischief, for it sinks into the soul. But that is not the worst. For very soon, nay perhaps at once, comes the further temptation, and that is not to confess the sin, and, as far as you can, amend it, but to leave it alone and avoid it for the future; to say to yourself, 'This is done, and cannot be undone; but I will never do it again.' This bargain with yourself to leave an evil thing uncleansed in your life, this compromise with evil, this compact with your own disobedience, is to be the starting-point of a new and better life! Henceforward you are to sin in that way no more! Henceforward you are to walk quite straight! and you are to begin with this plain sin as your first act! Henceforward you are to be just, but you are to begin with an act of injustice! Henceforward you are to keep straight, but you are to begin with going quite out of the path! A whole life of truth is to follow on a deliberate falsehood! The absurdity of this is so plain, that if we did not know by the temptations of our own

hearts how easy, how natural, how frequent it is for our souls to make such proposals to ourselves, we might well call it incredible. Yet it is a temptation which will beset all men in some degree, and some men in a very great degree. And we cannot too resolutely compel ourselves to see that God will not sanction our giving way to it.

What then is the conclusion? The conclusion is the duty of cherishing, by every means that we can use, a habit of instant obedience to God's call whenever our conscience sounds it in our minds. Cherish it for your own sake. For there is certainly no obedience so happy as ready obedience; it brings a charm with it; it gets rid of many temptations simply by giving them no time; it gets over many difficulties by its own impulse; it keeps up a warm consciousness of belonging to God and trying to please Him; it saves you from the very serious temptation of which I have been speaking, the temptation to put off not only for a time, but altogether, the duty that sometimes falls to the lot of all men, the duty of correcting and repairing our own faults. Cherish it again for the sake of others. It helps everybody about you. It makes the whole world happier. It makes all service easier and pleasanter. It lays hold on the hearts of all, and binds them not only to you, but to goodness and the law of goodness. But above all cherish it for your Master's sake. For it is one of the ways in which you can prove your loyalty, and it is moreover one of the ways in which your loyalty can be fostered and warmed into true fervour. He, we know, finds pleasure in our

doing and loving what is right, as He finds pain in our doing what is wrong. This is one of the ways in which we can please Him. And for that reason let us study not to prolong the time to keep His commandments.

October 25, 1868.

SERMON XXI.

THE FORGIVENESS OF THE LAW AND OF THE GOSPEL.

HEBREWS ix. 13, 14.

'*For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*'

THROUGHOUT the comparison which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes between the sacrifices of the Law and the sacrifice of our Lord, the difference insisted on is the powerlessness of the one and the power of the other. The Law with its sacrifices could not make the comers to its worship perfect; the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin; the offerings of the Law had on this very account to be perpetually repeated, because they never really did what they aimed at doing; the High Priest had on this account to go every year into the Holy of Holies with the blood of the Atonement, every priest had to stand daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same

sacrifices, which could never take away sin. But the sacrifice of the Gospel was offered once, and once only, because it 'perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' Once, and once only, did the Saviour enter the true Holy Place, for He never needed to come out and enter it again. The old sacrifices were taken away that He might substitute for sacrifices and burnt offerings and offerings for sin the doing of the will of God. And the result was, that while that old covenant had given many commands, and guarded them with many sanctions, the especial characteristic of the new covenant is, 'I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.'

Now there are two obvious objections to all this doctrine which are worth examining, because by examining them we shall better understand what the doctrine itself precisely is. On the one side it is not unnatural to say, 'Is it really true that the worshippers who offered those old sacrifices did not consider themselves, and had not a right to consider themselves, forgiven for those sins on account of which the sacrifices were offered? When a Hebrew did something wrong, and afterwards repented, and came to the Tabernacle or the Temple and offered the sacrifice ordered by the Law, and humbly prayed for forgiveness, are we to suppose that he did not feel forgiven, or that he had not a right to feel forgiven?'

To this it may be answered, I suppose most people would at once answer, 'Yes; he felt forgiven, and he

had a right to feel forgiven; but he sinned again, and needed the sacrifice again. He was not forgiven in such a sense as to set him free from future sin. He was not cleansed as well as forgiven. And therefore he needed a renewal of the sacrifice.' But this only leads to the other difficulty. For must we not say precisely the same of Christians? If they do wrong and are forgiven, is it the case that they never do wrong again? Is it sure that the sacrifice of the Cross makes Christians perfect any more than the Jewish sacrifices made Jews perfect? If the Jews needed to be forgiven again because they sinned again, will not Christians need the same renewal of forgiveness for the same repetition of sin? Is not the experience of most of us very like theirs in this matter? sinning many many times in spite of very earnest sorrow and very earnest resolutions? And how then can it be said that this is the point in which the sacrifice of Christ differed from the sacrifice of the Law?

Now in order to deal with these two difficulties, we must look a little deeper. No doubt, when the worshipper under the old Law repented of a sin and offered a sacrifice, he considered himself, and he had a right to consider himself, forgiven. But what part did the sacrifice take in giving him this feeling of forgiveness? Clearly none but this, that it was the appointed means of approaching God. It had no power in itself. Whether one thing was commanded or another thing, made no difference. Just as Naaman found the waters of Jordan capable of healing his leprosy simply because

he was commanded to bathe in the Jordan, so the penitent found in the sacrifice a token of forgiveness simply because it was enjoined. To all such sacrifices St. Paul's words about circumcision would equally apply, 'Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.' The Jew offered sacrifice and was forgiven. But the sacrifice did nothing for him. It gave him no assurance of God's love. It gave him no promise of aid in his inner conflict with his own temptations. It was the appointed means whereby he obtained forgiveness of particular sins. But it did not of itself make him feel that he was God's child. It did not speak to his spiritual nature. If he considered it as a type or an allegory, he might learn lessons from it, and he was no doubt meant to learn lessons from it. He might be led darkly and hesitatingly to learn that sin was a very solemn thing, that the forgiveness of sin was in some mysterious way connected with death, that the death of the victim pointed to his own life forfeited but spared. But all this is not in the sacrifice itself, but in the realities which it symbolised. There was nothing in the sacrifice itself to speak to his heart, to his better nature, to his longing for holiness, to the upward spring of his soul. He could not say what the Christian so often, so very often, says to himself of his Redeemer, 'He died for me, His blood was shed for me, He loved me, He came down from heaven for me.' The sacrifice was a token that his sin was forgiven, but it had no tendency to make him a better man, to bring him nearer to God, to make

him feel more sure that God loved him. The forgiveness that it procured for him was like the cancelling of a debt, but it was no more. The sacrifice did not make him, did not profess to make him, had no tendency to make him, a new creature.

Not such is the forgiveness which God promises in the life and death of Christ. What He gives us by this sacrifice is not bare forgiveness only, but a new heart, and new strength, and new light. The death of our Saviour tells us of a love which nothing, not even death, can quench, nothing, not even death, can bar. It lifts us, by the very thought of it, to a higher state. It speaks to gratitude, and tells us what we owe in return for such inexhaustible love. It speaks to the conscience, and sets before us the true nature of the heavenly life. It unites us to God, and assures us that we are His children, and that we cannot be torn from His arms. It makes us His children in a sense in which we never were His children before.

It is true that Christians sin after they have been forgiven. But not the mere old sin over again; not the rebellion which leaves God altogether; not the return of the old deadness, and blindness, and darkness. He who has once been forgiven for Christ's sake, and has learnt what is meant by the Cross of Christ, has in that Cross, if not a strength which shall make all sin impossible, yet a life which makes all life different. If he sins again, his repentance is quick, and keen, and piercing. If he is tempted, his resistance has a new energy. And meanwhile there is a new spring in all that he does, and

a new hope and a new tie to heaven, and a new knowledge of God.

It cannot be denied, indeed, that it is still possible to go back simply to rebellion and disobedience. The new strength is great, but it is not, for all that, such as to give us victory without effort. And a man may sin wilfully, may break quite away, may give up the higher life altogether after he has received the knowledge of the truth. This the writer of the Epistle fully acknowledges, and warns his readers, that as the Gospel gives more aid, so under it is there the liability to a greater fall. The forgiven Jew could but fall back where he had been before; the forgiven Christian may fall far lower.

So, then, the forgiveness of the two covenants differs not in degree, as if one were more and the other less, but in nature. The forgiveness of the Law said, 'Thou shalt not be punished;' the forgiveness of the Gospel says, 'I love thee still.' The forgiveness of the Law said, 'Go back to thy duty without fear;' the forgiveness of the Gospel says, 'Thou art My own child, abide always with Me.' The utmost point to which the Law could ever reach was to say, 'Thy sins and iniquities will I remember no more,' and even that was an ideal to which weak human nature could never attain; but the Gospel says, 'Nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ.'

The Cross of Christ is far more than an assurance of the remission of sins. It is, first, a source of strength. We cannot think of it, it is inconceivable that we should think of it, as the Jewish penitent must have thought of

his offering, a sacrifice made for a particular occasion, and then done with. It is an assurance, such an assurance as was never given to man before, that God's love anticipates our need. 'He that gave us His own Son, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' It is not, moreover, a promise of future strength. It does not say, 'God will make you stronger by-and-by. No, God is with you now. He strengthens you now. Can you conceive it possible that He who gave you so much should refuse you anything that you really want for your true life? Throw yourself on that strength. If you are in temptation, think of the Cross, and see there that God will give you the victory. If you have often sinned, think of Christ and persevere. There has been some reason for your fall, but not, assuredly not, the want of aid from God. If you feel, as we all perhaps sometimes feel, under a kind of spell, which makes duty impossible and sin a necessity, rise up against your enemy, and feel certain that God will give you the strength the moment that you want it, even if up to that very moment you feel as if He had forsaken you. You can obey. You really can, whatever you may think, and the Cross of Christ is the proof. Try, and you will find it so. How many thousands have tried, tried weakly, doubtingly, wonderingly, tried with only half faith, and yet have found what they sought! Try with the love of God full in your mind, and you cannot fail.

But again, the Cross of Christ, as it is a source of strength, so is it a call. It is a source of strength to

those who need strength, to those who have a deep sense of their own sinfulness, to those who have often slipped and are sadly certain of their own weakness, to those whose hearts long above everything else to be set free from sin, to those who mourn for sin and hunger and thirst for righteousness. But if there be no strong feeling on that side, if by God's grace our lives flow on with little to awake the sense of sin, with little to compel the conscience to look on cleansing as the one great need of life, with few self-conflicts, with few temptations, with little to teach us our utter weakness, then is the Cross of Christ a call ever to something higher, ever to approach God more nearly, ever to pray more fervently, ever to do more, to live more for the God who loved so much, whose love was so proved, whose only Son shrank back from no suffering to show at once His love for us and the power of that holiness in which alone we can find our own true being.

To the penitent the Cross of Christ says, 'Thy sin hath not quenched My love.' To the struggling it says, 'My strength is sufficient for thee.' To the loving it says, 'Come, follow Me.' It has a message for every soul that lives, a message that needs not to be put into words, for it speaks direct to the very soul itself. And it calls us to the loving arms of God, who has been our Father even when we knew it not.

November 1, 1868.

SERMON XXII.

GOD'S MERCY AND JUSTICE.

EXODUS xxxiv. 6, 7.

'*And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.*'

THIS proclamation of God's character was made to Moses in answer as it were to his petition to see God's glory. Moses was in pain for his people. They had grievously sinned. They had fallen back into gross idolatry. In order to give Moses an opportunity of showing his true character, God had said, 'Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.' But Moses did not forget his duty to those over whom he was set, nor allow a selfish thought to come between himself and his people. Rather he besought the Lord that he might share their punishment: 'Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt

forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.' Nor was the noble nature of the man exhausted by this one effort. He saw that He still had God's favour, and he begs for the highest possible mark of it, that he might be admitted into the Divine Presence itself. And his prayer is granted as far as such a prayer could be granted. He is allowed to see the glory of the Lord pass by, and to hear His nature proclaimed. And the moment that this was done we see why he asked for it: not for himself, but that he might urge with still greater earnestness his prayer for his people: 'O Lord, let my Lord, I pray Thee, go among us; for it is a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Thine inheritance.' Throughout all Moses never separates himself from those who were entrusted to him, and to the very last it is 'our iniquity,' 'our sin,' not 'their iniquity,' 'their sin,' that he begs to have forgiven.

Such is the servant as becomes a servant. And the character of God Himself is proclaimed to him in words that such a servant would well understand, though they might seem inconsistent and hardly intelligible to many. For this character, which henceforward is the prevailing idea of the Old Testament, contains two distinct and apparently opposite parts: to us Christians indeed very easy to reconcile and to understand; to men who have not so learnt God's revelations, exceedingly strange. In the first place, God's mercy is proclaimed in no measured language; 'merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy

for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin;' what words could be used more ample? what promise of forgiveness more free, more full? what openings for appeals to His kindness more large? He is long-suffering, and gives time; He is abundant in goodness and truth, and gives aid and light; He keeps mercy for thousands, and never pleads that He has already forgiven too many. He forgives iniquity and transgression and sin, and thus covers every different kind of fault. But then follows that He will by no means clear the guilty, and that He visits their iniquity upon children, and upon children's children.

Now this double character, which is the groundwork of all the account of God's dealings with His people throughout the rest of the Old Testament, which reappears in a thousand different shapes in the Psalms and in the Prophets, is of course the ordinary Christian doctrine of God's infinite mercy in dealing with all who repent, and God's absolute justice in dealing with all who do not repent. 'He forgives iniquity and transgression and sin;' nay, there is absolutely no sin whatever which He will not forgive if the heart of the sinner be touched and turn to Him; 'He will by no means clear the guilty,' He will work out the evil of sin to its remotest consequences, if the sin be persisted in. Repent, and the healing power of God will have such efficacy that no sin shall keep you away from Him. Refuse to repent, and you shall see, it may be soon, it may be late, but at the last you shall assuredly see the evil poison of your sin working out the mischief

that properly comes from it, doing hurt to all who have anything to do with you, and either at last or at first working ruin to yourself.

But though this be one of the elementary doctrines of the Gospel, it is not therefore to be omitted from consideration, nor must we fail to come back to it every now and then and apply it closely to our own lives.

God deals with us as a father deals with his children. Just as an upright and loving father, He is always ready to welcome the slightest movement of true affection: just as an upright and loving father, He cannot pretend what is not the truth, He cannot say that He is satisfied when His children not only have disobeyed but have not really turned back from their disobedience.

Consider for a moment how a son may abuse his father's known kindness. He knows that his father's affection is very strong. He has learnt that his father can not only forgive, but that, having forgiven, his affection returns in all its strength. He knows that whatever he does will be judged by a merciful eye; that his own account of it will be accepted; that never has his father been extreme to mark what is done amiss. Now what should we think of a son who, knowing all this, allowed himself on this very account to evade his father's wishes, to disobey in spirit if not in letter, to count upon forgiveness, and make the certainty of that forgiveness a reason for self-indulgence, and almost for rebellion? What should we think of a son who was not moved

to affection by being certain of affection, but rather tried to get as much self-indulgence as he could out of that certainty? What should we think of a son who anticipated the forgiveness by sinning a little more on that account than he otherwise would? Or, if the father had means of knowing that this had been the case, what would that father feel? Put in this way, such a betrayal of a father's confidence seems impossible, except to the worst and wickedest. But what we should never dream of doing of set purpose we may slip into almost without being aware, partly from weakness of nature, partly from blindness of conscience. There is such a thing as being lax with ourselves because God is gentle and merciful. There is such a thing as allowing our weak wills to flinch from the effort necessary for amendment because God is not extreme to mark what is done amiss. It is possible for a son not to care very much about his own conduct because he knows his father's kindness. It is possible for any one of us to want energy, to want heartiness, to want completeness both in doing duty and in fighting with faults, because we have heard so much of God's inexhaustible mercy.

Yet again, as in looking to the future and guiding our conduct, so also in looking to the past and judging of our conduct, there is the same opening for a misuse of God's overflowing gentleness. A son can certainly be tempted—nay, some sons are tempted—to think less than they ought of neglect, of disobedience, of frequently repeated sins, because they know that their

fathers, however much they may grieve, will nevertheless be very gentle in judging and in punishing them. A son is sometimes tempted to think very lightly of very serious faults because his father out of excessive love has formerly been very lenient in similar cases. That gentleness ought indeed to be met by us with all the more severity in our own judgment of ourselves. That tenderness which cannot bear to believe evil, which makes out every fault better than it really is, which visits with the least punishment that can be inflicted, that tenderness ought to be a challenge to us to be all the more strict in reviewing our own lives lest we ungenerously abuse such deep affection. But it is not always so between son and father. Neither is it always so between us and God. Wrong as it is, we *are* tempted to use God's mercy as a sort of plea to our own consciences, and to make our repentance brief and our sorrow very light and our self-condemnation very trifling, because we count on the forgiveness which God bestows without stint on all kind of sin.

What is the truth of this matter? The truth is that God knows absolutely and judges absolutely, and cannot be deceived like an earthly father. He has revealed His character to us in its double aspect for our good and for nothing else. And if any one ask how can the limit between His mercy and His judgment be determined, the answer is plain. Each part of the doctrine is true, as far as you are concerned, to that extent precisely which will aid you best to render true service. The precise limits of God's mercy and of

God's justice are determined for each man by the needs of the nature of that man. In so far as the mercy of God, the certainty of forgiveness, the certainty of aid, the certainty of love, the lenity of judgment are a help to you to live more to God, spur your generosity, touch your feelings, awake your energy, uphold you when you feel sinking, save you from despairing, encourage you to persevere, give you happiness in your efforts to please your Master, so far all this character of the Divine Nature is true to the very uttermost; as true as if there were absolutely nothing else in God but His mercy. But again, in so far as you need a firmer rule, and the iron strength of unswerving justice to lean upon, so far as you require to be upheld against your own weakness and baseness by the wholesome severity of a just Judge, so far as the knowledge of an unerring judgment helps you to keep from sin, so far as it elevates your nature, exalts your idea of holiness, uplifts your imagination, to feel that underneath all affection and all gentleness stands the eternal rock of the absolutely right, so far the revelation of God's sure justice is true in its turn to the uttermost; as true as if there were absolutely nothing else in God but His justice.

What, then, is the practical form which this doctrine takes in our daily life? It is this. God will forgive, will forgive to the very uttermost, every soul that turns to Him. But there is no room, no room whatever, for mere forgiveness without any repentance, without any amendment, without any growth in grace, without any devotion of the life. If you persist in the sin, God

assuredly does not forgive it. If you think lightly of a grievous sin, God assuredly does not think of it lightly. Honestly repent and do your best to please God, and there is no limit to His mercy. Persist in doing wrong, and however unhappy it may make you, there is no check to His severity. For what you owe to God is yourself. If you have not given Him that, you have no claim on His favour.

November 22, 1868.

SERMON XXIII.

THE NEW CREATURE.

GALATIANS vi. 15.

'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.'

THIS doctrine of St. Paul is at bottom the same as that which our Lord expressed to Nicodemus in the words, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Our Lord, no doubt, meant especially to apply it to what Nicodemus was then doing. Nicodemus had not the courage to declare himself a disciple; he came by night; he wanted to be, as it were, a half disciple; he wanted to be taught, but not to be required to acknowledge the teacher. Our Lord tells him that no mere learning of the truth will bring him into the kingdom. He must undergo an entire change, or he cannot enter. We have no need to push our Lord's words beyond their plain meaning. Our Lord does not say that a half obedience is utterly valueless, that it will not bring a man nearer to the kingdom, that it will not prepare a man to enter. He says that it will not enable a man to enter. In the last resort, no doubt, it matters little whether you are near or far, if

after all you stay outside. But in the meanwhile, it may fully be granted that a half obedience is better than no obedience. And yet, when we have granted that, it still remains that without an entire change of nature, which our Lord here calls being 'born again,' which St. Paul calls a 'new creature,' a man is not really reconciled to God, and in a certain sense it may well be said that all else avails him nothing. Our Lord was applying this to Nicodemus and his cowardice. St. Paul is applying the same thought to those who desired to bring Christians into bondage to the letter of the law. In either case, the true doctrine as opposed to the false is the same.

The fact is, that a man may do much that is right, and avoid much that is wrong, without being on that account really right-minded, except in a very slight degree, or perhaps at all. A man may be kind from natural impulse; brave and true from constitutional fearlessness; pure from want of temptation. And yet, when he is tried on the side on which his nature is weak, his fall may be enough to show that he has no real *principle* of good in him whatever. I am not speaking of cases where a man's fall into sin proves his weakness, but of those in which the character of the sin shows an absence of true love of what is right. Now you may very well say that what is good in such a man is a special, and, if he did but know it, a very precious gift of God. You may point to his truth, or his purity, or his courage, or his kindness, as a proof that God has not left him alone, that God is truly working in him, that God is giving him one of the most powerful of all aids towards a spiritual

life, for in this sense these natural graces are of the utmost value; but you cannot say of such a man that he is really a servant of God, for he has not yet got sight of the true aim. Natural goodness of this kind or of that may keep a man right on this side or on that. But nothing can make the life good as a whole, not even in that imperfect sense in which we speak of men as good, except a purpose, a principle of right as such. The possession of this principle is what St. Paul calls a 'new creature.'

Apply this to an ordinary discharge of duty. Everybody knows that some duties are easy and some are hard. What is to carry us steadily through difficult and disagreeable duties, unless there be not merely a resolution to do this or to do that, but a resolution to do all, unless we aim, not at this particular service or at that, but at pleasing our Lord and Master?

Or again, apply this to our behaviour in things that are called indifferent. These indifferent things are often rightly said to be the true tests of our lives. For things that are prescribed by law do not show the bent of our souls. It is when you come to things not prescribed by law that you see what a man's true character is. Then you see whether he merely obeys the law of God, or whether he has made it his own. Then you see whether, if there had been no law, he would have made a law for himself, and that law would have been God's law. For true obedience to God's law is not merely doing what the law positively commands, but wherever God's law gives no command, there still living in the spirit of it. True

obedience is that which if not commanded would still do the same things, as far as it saw them, for love of God. For true obedience aims at something beyond itself, namely, at the love of God.

Still more does the same truth hold in our repentance. We cannot too often force upon ourselves that half repentance is no real repentance. It is not repentance, if you see for the first time that you have been doing wrong, simply to be sorry, and do that wrong thing no more. That is very often a large part of repentance; but very often it is only a small part; and in all cases full repentance it is not. Repentance implies, not the correction of a particular fault, but the turning of the will and heart to God. And very rarely, if ever, is there true repentance for a fault when the only change in the life is to avoid that particular fault. Nay, that is not all. The Christian is generally compelled to learn by very painful experience that to avoid a particular fault and do it no more is in most cases simply impossible. You say you will do this no more, and you mean what you say, and you feel sure at the time that you will do what you mean. But you soon begin to find that your life is not made of separate pieces that can be separately mended. Your life all hangs together. If you make no change except to mend some particular fault, you soon find, first, that the old temptations, sometimes in new shapes, sometimes in old, come back again; that the emotion and stir of feeling that was strong within you settles down after a time; that the evil of doing evil and the excellence of doing right cease to be so vividly seen; that you are no longer so keenly

sensitive to the wrong of the wrong thing that you did. And somehow, you know not how, your good resolutions either fade away, or some rush of temptation overthrows them all.

There is but one way to serve God, and that is to serve nothing else; and what is wanted if we are to be His children is that such a change should pass over us as that the love of Him and the desire to please Him shall be supreme.

I do not mean that this is an easy lesson to learn. To learn these elementary lessons is the hardest of all tasks. It is really hard, it is the work of a life to learn in all its fulness such a simple doctrine as that we cannot serve two masters. Again and again do we, as it were, in pure silliness, try to combine this and try to combine that with the duty due to our Lord. We are unwilling to give up this or that temptation; we are unwilling to surrender this or that pleasure; we are unwilling to shut out this or that hope; we are unwilling to say absolutely and without all reserve, 'Thy will be done.' Even the tried Christian finds to his surprise that he has to learn all this over again. Perhaps most Christians, the longer they live are the more impressed, not with what they have learnt of this lesson, but with what they have yet to learn.

But, however hard the lesson may be to learn, it is at any rate within the power of every soul to begin, and above all other lessons is this one which the man who begins to learn it early finds it most easy to learn fully; nay, more than that, he who begins to learn it early reaps

the blessing of feeling in a fuller sense than all others what a channel it is of God's grace, of spiritual life, of warmth of heart, of that peace which is the spiritual blessedness that attends long and tried devotion. It is a hard lesson to learn, but it is not hard to begin learning. It is not hard to aim at a real true loyalty. It is not hard to recognise that truth which yet it may prove so hard to apply.

And yet once more, as it is not hard to begin to learn this lesson, so no one can tell how much is gained by trying to learn it at once. For when we try to do right and to satisfy our consciences, not by resolving once for all to please our God as much as ever we can, but by avoiding this fault or that fault, it is wonderful how difficult, how full of traps and snares, how full of pitfalls and precipices, our path becomes. We try to avoid faults, and we find that sometimes we are not strong enough; and sometimes our consciences seem to suffer a momentary blindness; and sometimes, nay, very often, a little fault somehow leads on to a very bad fault; and our labour seems all thrown away. And why is this? Because we began our lesson, as it were, at the wrong end, and did not try first of all to make God's will our aim, and think about pleasing Him by the whole character of our daily life.

But that is not all. The man who tries once for all to turn his face to God, or if we prefer St. Paul's expression, to put on the new man which belongs to the Christian, he, and he alone, not only has God's perpetual aid, but feels and knows it. God, indeed, is ever

with us, and many a one He educates, as it were, in secret, bringing the soul by inscrutable guidance of Providence, step by step, closer and closer to Himself. Many a Christian, when he looks back, has to acknowledge that he has been taught many things, he knows not when or how, by the mere operation of the life that God has provided for him to live. But how far better to be led on by God and to know that you are led; to obey like a child who throws aside a toy or a book at his father's call; to repent like a child that is instantly recalled from a fault by his father's gentle check or look of disapproval; to live secure within reach of our Father's eye, and never to be quite unconscious of His presence. This is the happiness of those who give to God not service so much as themselves, and strive not to reconcile life to duty, but to make duty the one inspiration of life.

February 7, 1869.

SERMON XXIV.

BODILY ABSTINENCE.

GALATIANS v. 17.

'*For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*'

IN the Collect for this day we pray to God that He will 'give us grace to use such abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey His motions in righteousness and true holiness.' These words define at once the true purpose of all abstinence and the limit within which abstinence is useful. The purpose of abstinence is to subdue the flesh to the Spirit, and to give free room for the higher impulses that God ever and again is putting into our souls. The limit of abstinence is the attainment of this purpose. 'The flesh,' St. Paul teaches us, and we should know it by experience even if he did not teach us, 'lusteth against the Spirit.' Sometimes inclination, sometimes laziness and unwillingness to make any extra exertion, prevents us from readily or really obeying the call of the conscience. You are told by conscience to do a kindness, but it will cost you trouble; you are told to make a sacrifice, but the sacrifice will be

unpleasant; you are told to go to your duty, but just at that moment you want to do something else; you are stirred by a bad thought, and the Spirit warns you to cast it out, but to cast out an evil thought often requires a great effort; conscience whispers that your temper is not right, but it seems very hard upon you to have to be good-tempered in such trying circumstances; the struggle is an everyday thing, and we all know what it is like. And we all know, too, how often it happens that the whisper of conscience, the good suggestion of the heart, the noble impulse, all has been in vain, quite thrown away, because the flesh has proved too strong. It is the business of the Christian life to subdue this rebellious flesh, and let God's Spirit work His proper work in making us true servants of God, and for the purpose of thus subduing the flesh, abstinence is necessary.

Now, when St. Paul is here speaking of the flesh, it does not seem that he is thinking of bodily sin only or of bodily temptations. He uses the word fleshly or carnal to describe all that belongs to our lower nature, to that part of our nature which is not in the image of God, and moreover he uses it to describe that lower nature when it is at variance with the higher nature whereby we are akin to God Himself. All sin and all temptation to sin he would speak of as fleshly or carnal. But, on the other hand, it is not merely at random that he has chosen this word fleshly. For he certainly does mean to give a special character to his teaching and to his warnings by the use of this word. He means to imply that a special danger is to be

watched against in bodily temptations; that sins of the body have a special taint about them, a special power of mischief; attack us on a side on which it is specially dangerous to be overcome. And consequently that it is a special duty to subdue all wrong impulses of this sort. And it is in subduing these impulses that abstinence is necessary.

The subjugation of the body is a necessity; unless the body be subdued we have not done what God has put us here to do. Abstinence for that purpose is necessary so far, and so far only, as it contributes to that purpose, and the limit must be determined in the last resort by experience, for it cannot be determined by anything else. We are to use such abstinence as shall subdue the flesh to the spirit, and how much and of what kind that will be, must be determined by Christians for themselves. A general rule may sometimes help them, but this general rule will, if the Church be in a healthy state, vary from age to age to suit the different circumstances, the different temptations, the different weaknesses of different times.

But it is often useful to consider the matter and see what there is to help us in guiding our own lives in regard to such abstinence.

The fact with which we have to deal is this: that bodily sins and bodily temptations have a peculiar power of fastening on the nature, and a man who indulges them will find that no other chain that he can bind round himself will hold him so tight or will hamper him so much. It has sometimes indeed

been said that sins of the body allowed to continue till middle age are never by any chance got rid of afterwards. And though this is no doubt an exaggeration, yet it is fearfully near the truth. Such sins do somehow become a part of the man in a sense in which other sins do not. All sins no doubt, of whatever kind, become worse and are much more difficult to shake off if they are allowed to become habitual. But bodily sins to a degree far more than any other sins whatever. Bad temper, worldliness, pride, envy, these by long habit become fearfully strong; and very often it is exceedingly difficult to cure them if they have been long permitted to dwell in the soul and to poison the life. But even these are not like bodily sins, and for this reason among others, that when they are cured they are often quite cured. But bodily sins, even when they are cured, very often, nay almost always, leave behind them a bitter leaven of which the life never seems to get quite free; the sin perhaps is quite gone and yet the weakness remains, the sense of degradation remains, the possibility of relapse remains. Well is it said of these sins that they 'war against the soul.' With good reason is it that to these temptations above all others should be applied the warning of our Lord, 'To pluck out the right eye, to cut off the right hand,' rather than let even such an innocent, such an excellent thing as eye or hand lead us into such sins as these.

Now the strength of all these temptations is unquestionably to be found in an indulgence of them. Give way once, and the temptation becomes stronger. Give way

again, and the temptation becomes stronger still. Give way habitually, and though it is not irresistible yet it will seem so. Take such an ordinary case as the laziness which is at the bottom of a great deal of selfishness. The temptation to be selfish in this way, the temptation not to exert ourselves in order to do a kindness, the temptation to sink into a kind of apathy about the comfort or happiness of other people, the temptation to let things alone rather than have trouble, can any one deny that it grows with a very remarkable rapidity if once we begin to give way to it? Or again, the temptation not to be lazily selfish, but to be greedily selfish; to seek in all cases our own comfort, our own ease, our own gratification, is not this in its turn one of those evils which grow with indulgence and take root in the soul by merely being permitted in the life? So again, the temptation to everything that approaches to gluttony, and delight in eating, can by mere unchecked indulgence be cherished into a very real trouble and hindrance to the spiritual life. Or lastly, to go to quite another kind of bodily temptation, the temptation to delight in mere strength and activity, to exult in bodily superiority, to make bodily prowess a chief aim, to admire it above all other things, and so to go on to the worship of brute strength, whether it be strength of person or of will, and to forget that all strength is valueless except as the servant of the higher nature, the spirit. In all these cases, and even more in some others, it is certain that the sins of the body and the temptations of the body win power over us

because we indulge them, and we can subdue them only by holding them in check.

To hold them in check is to abstain. This abstinence may take, and has taken, different forms. And we have the testimony of Christians to the use which they have found sometimes in one of them, sometimes in another. Christians have sometimes abstained for a season from all except what was barely necessary for life; cutting down food both in quantity and in kind; cutting down sleep both in length and in comfort; cutting down dress both in appearance and in warmth, to what would just suffice. And they have found it useful as compelling them to feel by real personal experience, first, their own weakness and the degree in which they have allowed themselves to be at the mercy of outward circumstances; secondly, the privation of others whose deep poverty has made them bare. So, again, Christians have sometimes found it positively necessary to practise total abstinence from particular indulgences because they have learnt by experience that they are weak in that particular direction, and they therefore will not trust themselves where they are conscious of danger. Such forms of abstinence as these have been at times prevalent, and at all times I have no doubt there will be some who will find them useful and even necessary. But besides these, there still remains that kind of abstinence which is incumbent on all Christians at all times, and which the present season of Lent is not intended to make us practise, because we ought to be always practising it, but to remind us of as a Christian duty.

Increase that abstinence, which I may describe as never allowing our indulgence even in what is quite innocent and right to go, I do not say into wrong, but even into nearness to wrong. The Christian who knows what the body is will ever, in watching over all bodily temptations, not merely abstain from evil but from approaching evil. He will never be content unless a very real and visible margin separates him from what he knows is so corrupting. He will not wait till the conscience reproves: he will shrink back even when the conscience gently warns. He will in this matter seek not only victory but assured victory. He will not merely keep from plunging into the evil thing; he will keep it at a sure distance. Nor is that all. Knowing that the body and all that belongs to the body must, if he be a true soldier of Christ, be absolutely subdued to the Spirit, he will see that the things of the body are not made too much of in his estimate; he will train himself in disregard of them; he will compel his thoughts to abstain from dwelling on them; he will try to make himself sure that if his duty required it, he could cheerfully give them up.

This is the hardness, this is the nobleness to which the soldier of Christ is summoned. A happy life? yes: an easy life, full of selfish enjoyment, a life that requires no effort, a life that calls you to bear no pain? no. Picture to yourself a service that would require nothing, that would impose no sacrifice, that would give endless pleasure and nothing else, and your better nature could not find any true attraction in what would be beneath itself. God has not so made us. He has made us

with desire to come to Himself, and to be in our measure like Him; and most certainly, whatever claims mere self-indulgence may have, there is only one thing that can make the soul at peace with itself, and that is to know that by God's grace the life is chastened and purified and ennobled so as to be worthy of the man. To that life are we summoned by the discipline of Lent.

February 14, 1869.

SERMON XXV.

ANTINOMIANISM AND KINDRED DELUSIONS.

ROMANS vi. 15.

'Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?'

IN the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans St. Paul is answering some of the objections which had been made, and which as long as human nature remains the same ever will be made, to his doctrine of salvation by grace. St. Paul taught, that what made a man a child of God, was not any system of observances however excellent, any arrangement of life however perfect and well adapted together, any code of laws however holy, but the possession of an inner spirit. The objection is, Will not men plead this inner spirit and then sin just as much as they please? Will they not do wicked things and say, 'my conscience encouraged me to do them, or, at any rate, did not reprove me?' And if they do this, how is it possible to answer them?

Now it is quite certain that men will be found who will argue in this very way, who will plead conscience as a cover for wrong-doing, and convert liberty of

conscience into liberty of sin. It is quite certain that there will be such men, because there have been such men. And of all the men who thus pervert the truth, perhaps the worst are those who hold, or rather who pretend to hold, that the sins of those who have the grace of God are not sins at all; that if we be really moved by God's Spirit we may do what we like; that the distinction between right and wrong disappears in the case of those to whom God hath given His grace, and that whatever they do is lawful, however wicked, because they do it. Such fanaticism as this, horrible fanaticism it is, has made its appearance in Christ's Church at different times, and particularly at times when St. Paul's doctrines have been specially insisted upon. The holders of such opinions in this bare extreme form have always made but a small sect. This lawlessness is too distinctly condemned by all healthy consciences to allow it to prevail over a large part of the general Christian society. No body of Christians that can make any pretence to the name of a Church has ever been so deluded. And I suppose we may safely say that no ordinary Christian is in very great danger of being so misled.

But you will rarely find any kind of error, however shocking in its extreme form and when stripped of all disguise, which has laid hold of even small bodies of men, and which does not find a sort of counterpart of itself in a great many minds. It is rarely worth while to pay much attention to these extreme errors on their own account. But it is often worth while to reflect very

carefully whether we are quite so free as at first sight we all seem to be from the error which thus seems so shocking. You may not be as great a coward as Pilate when he condemned an innocent man to satisfy a mob; but you may have in you a less degree of precisely the same kind of cowardice when you plead that you really wish to do right, but are not prepared to be a martyr, and therefore refuse to go counter to the will and opinion of your acquaintance. You may not deny our Lord like St. Peter, but you may be doing precisely the same sort of thing when you are ashamed of the right. You may never tell so downright and monstrous a lie as Ananias and Sapphira did, but colouring over facts to gratify your vanity comes from the same root. You may not be a Pharisee, but yet the universal inclination to take more care of our outside life than of our inside life is plainly pharisaical. The roots of all sins are in us. And if any seem too shocking to be a temptation, we have but to look closely, and we shall almost invariably find that even that shocking sin can claim kindred with a part of our life.

Now, as I said before, no Christian is likely in ordinary circumstances to be deluded into a belief, that because God loves him, and watches over him, and speaks to his heart, therefore the words 'right' and 'wrong' have for him lost all their meaning, and he may with perfect safety and with ease of mind indulge every desire, give way to every impulse, give up watching his steps, yield to every temptation, be bound by no law, be as selfish, as false, as unjust, as impure, as mean, as idle as he

likes. No; this form of fanaticism is fairly out of reach and impossible.

But is it impossible that a man should go on doing wrong day after day and think little of it, because he has a vague sort of belief that God is very good, and will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss? Is it impossible that a man should leave some faults of character quite uncorrected, never struggle with them, never resist their impulses, never deeply regret them, from a belief that God will be merciful to those who love Him? Is it impossible to say to yourself, 'I really wish to do right, but somehow I cannot help this one thing, and God will look to my heart and not to my deeds, and will not punish what I do against my better nature?' Is it impossible before the bar of our own conscience to plead good feelings, religious feelings, right wishes, admiration for excellence, as an excuse for wrong conduct? Nay, is it not sometimes the case that sorrow is made to do duty for amendment, and we expect to be forgiven because we are sorry, and yet go on doing the same things still? Do we not sometimes find ourselves pleading, as it were, our self-condemnation as a sort of atonement for our sin? Do we not feel as if a confession of our faults and a profession, perhaps a sincere profession, of humility were a set-off against the faults, and restored us at once to God's favour? In all these cases, what is at the bottom but a kind of belief that sin is not so sinful in God's children as in those who are not God's children; that God will be merciful to sinners who profess to belong to Him; that

our doing wrong is not so serious a matter, if we have right feelings in our hearts; that the Gospel is not so strict a rule as the Law; that God's Spirit is not so great an enemy to sin as the old commandment was?

If we are to be children of God, the fundamental text, as St. Paul goes on to say, is this: 'To whom do ye yield yourselves servants to obey?' It is simply useless to speak of right feelings, of desire to serve, of good wishes, of bitter regrets, of aspirations after something higher. All these come in afterwards. The first question, which precedes the consideration of all these, is, To whom do ye yield yourselves? What rule are you striving to live by? What is the purpose of your will? Do you really contend with your faults, and try to bring your whole soul into conformity with the pattern set before you; or do you not? If you do not try, then good feelings, and longings, and regrets, and passionate prayers, do not prove that you have God's grace within you, or that you are truly under it.

When we plead that a fault in us is irresistible, that we *cannot* mend it, that it is in our nature, that it is of no use to struggle with it,—in the first place, it is impossible for us to be sure that we cannot mend it if we cease to try, for there are many faults which we may struggle against for a very long time, and which never seem to give way the least, and yet at last they do give way, and very often they give way entirely and leave us quite free. But, in the second place, even if it be true that you cannot mend it, your duty is not affected by that in the very slightest degree. You are

to try and to go on trying all the same, whether you can mend it or not. That is the very thing which God requires of you as a proof of your love for Him, namely, that as long as you live you try to conquer yourself for His sake. The fact is, that with regard to much that is faulty in you, it is quite true that you cannot mend it, but God can; and the condition which He has laid down before He mends any fault is this, that you shall do your very utmost to mend it yourself.

There is no doubt that many movements within the soul come from the Giver of all good, and may, in a certain sense, be called the fruits of His grace. When you read of some great act of heroic unselfishness and you thrill with admiration; when you read of some life of singular purity and saintliness and you long to be like it yourself; when your eyes fill and your heart warms as you are told of a great temptation nobly resisted; when you wish to be like some very good man; when you long for some excellence which you know you have not; when you feel very sorry either for some particular sin, or because your life seems to you so sinful and worthless; all these are no doubt motions of God's Spirit. But no one of these taken by itself, nor all of these put together, show that you are what the Apostle calls under grace, or, in other words, that you are fully enlisted in God's service. The only proof of that is that you have made up your mind, come what will of it, to obey God to the very utmost of your power.

This doctrine, which is needed often, seems to me to

be particularly needed now, the closer we approach to the commemoration of our Lord's death upon the Cross. The appeal is then made to our hearts and feelings. In the heart and feelings must begin the work of redemption always. But this very appeal is ever in vain if it do no more than affect our feelings for the time, and if it do not result in giving a clearer aim and a firmer resolve to our wills. If our Lord died for us upon the Cross, assuredly He died to make us better. He died that we might be set free from the dominion of that sin which by nature rules our lives and characters. He died that we might become holier and truer. He died that we might serve God as we never could have served Him otherwise. He died to reconcile us to God, and we know that reconciliation without cleansing is impossible. God's love for us is infinite, but it never swerves from one aim, to purify our souls, to make us true servants and children of His own. He forgives; but He never forgives without cleansing, and He never cleanses unless our wills consent to be cleansed. Our Lord died for us. But His death can only reach us by purifying us, and can only purify us if we give ourselves to be purified.

So, then, if we would approach that commemoration rightly, we must compel ourselves to see that there is no relaxing of God's law possible; that there is no mercy which will dispense with our utmost efforts to live sinless lives; that there is no love which will treat wrong as right. But what God offers, what He sent His Son to offer, what the Cross will ever offer, is the

power to love and to serve God. In that is wrapped up the blessedness of a quiet conscience, and the freedom from anxiety which belongs only to the forgiven, and the sense of being dearly and tenderly loved, and the strength which is ever supplied fresh from invisible sources, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and the hope of being with God Himself hereafter.

March 14, 1869.

SERMON XXVI.

THE REDEMPTION OF THE BODY.

ROMANS viii. 23.

'*And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*'

THESE and words like these are the encouragement and comfort of the Christian who feels it very difficult to maintain the rule of his own conscience over his own life. It is very disheartening to find that we make so little progress. It is often a sore temptation in more ways than one. We are tempted to lower our standard, and to say, 'I never can do quite right, and therefore it is useless to try. I will make a bargain with myself. I will just let this one thing alone, and in all else I will do right.' Or again we are tempted to lose heart altogether, and give up all attempts to serve God really and heartily. Or again we are tempted to rebellious and angry thoughts, and to think it very hard that this particular trial should be our trial, and that we should be called on to fight a battle which, as far as we can see, no one else is required to fight. But at such times it is good to have before our minds the confessions of great saints, that this lot is but

the common lot of all mankind, part, in fact, of our probation, as much one of the regular appointed burdens as anything else that we have to bear.

Let us see precisely what the Apostle's doctrine is.

The Apostle is speaking to those who like himself have been already redeemed in spirit. He describes how fierce an agony he had to pass through before he was brought to that redemption; how the very knowledge of God's law only made his sin clearer without making escape from it any easier; how he was torn in two by the commandment on the one side, and his own evil nature on the other; how he acknowledged the truth, and yet could not obey it; how utterly helpless he was to escape from this unhappiness; and how at last he was set free by the power of Christ. Not in all men does the battle between good and evil in the soul show so intense a heat. But all men, if they try to come to God at all, will find this battle within them. And the Apostle's experience is in that sense the experience of every one. And all men will find that the one great power which lifts the soul out of this trouble is that reliance on the strength of God which is inspired in the soul by the thoughts of the Cross of Christ. Let a man surrender his will to the will of God in absolute reliance on the love of God as shown to us in Christ, and he will have a strength given to him not otherwise to be attained. He will become master of his own life.

This is the redemption of the spirit. This redemption makes the aim of the soul heavenly. This redemption makes a man heartily, thoroughly will, with all the power

which is in his will, that his life may be good. This redemption translates the purpose of the life from the selfish, the frivolous, the silly, the bad, to the high, the self-devoted, the excellent. This redemption makes a man *wish* to be good with all his might; not the mere weak wish of one who walks one way and looks another; but that which our Lord calls the hunger and thirst after righteousness. Such is the redemption of the spirit. And this redemption may be complete here in this life; and not only may be, but ought to be. It is quite possible here in this life, with all our human weakness still around us, to choose the good once for all, and to give our whole souls to the choice. Until that is done it is useless to balance good and evil in our lives, and to fancy that good here will somehow make up for bad there, and that if we have sins, so have we good qualities, and that if much evil may be said of us, so may much good. We are selfish, perhaps, but then we are just. We indulge in wrong anger, but then we are strictly true. We are not always pure, but then we are generous. All such balancing and bargaining is here out of place. The question here is, Which do you choose? Which is you, and which is not you? Which do you put before you as the goal of life? or do you make no choice at all? The choice is *the* thing. To choose the good with the whole heart, that is what God requires, that is what Christ will give you strength to do, that is the redemption of the spirit.

But the redemption of the spirit is not the redemption of the whole man. There is yet more to be done. After

the choice has been made, and the power of God has, by enabling that choice to be made, transformed our whole life, yet we are by no means all at once just what we wish to be, or just what we ought to be. And here it is that too often we are very much disappointed, not only with ourselves, but with that service to which we are bound. For what is it that remains? Our wills are God's; but there still is very much that is not God's. There are temptations; there are inclinations; there are impulses. Some the fruits of our natural character; some the consequences of our past lives. Very often in the warmth of our self-devotion we cannot but believe that all these are mastered, or even cast out. Strange is it if the Christian, especially at times of warm feeling when kneeling at the Lord's Table, when thinking of the Cross, when listening to some earnest word of exhortation, should not feel, not merely as if he had chosen the right once for all, but as if he never again would be tempted to slip into the wrong. It seems as if nothing but personal experience could teach us how completely temptations can be killed and buried for a time, and yet come back again as bad as ever, or worse than ever, afterwards. To exercise an absolute authority over all these inclinations; to be able to control all impulses; to have the thoughts, the motions, the very instincts under that command which becomes a soldier of the Cross; to be masters of ourselves in the service of the supreme Master of all things, that is what St. Paul calls here the redemption of the body. This redemption he plainly implies does not belong to this world, but to the next. Here we are

waiting for the adoption, to wit, for the redemption of our body. Or as he puts it in the Epistle to the Philippians, 'Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.' Or again as it is expressed by St. John, 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.' The redemption of the body does indeed begin here. Christians do attain undeniably to greater self-control, to greater calm, to a truer service, to a more complete devotion. Temptations do wear out, and inclinations do learn to bend, and the inward fire of a spiritual purpose does somehow slowly but surely so transfigure this earthly vessel in which men live, that the whole man seems sometimes at last to glow with the light of the Spirit of God. But still to the very last the redemption of the body is never complete here on earth. To the very last there are frequent mistakes and frequent slips, and sometimes even grievous falls; and at all times the never-eradicated evil of human nature leaves the possibility of ruinous sins.

We are entering this day on the most solemn week of the whole year, and some of us cannot fail to be touched by the thoughts which this week will suggest. And some perhaps who will begin it without much thought will be more serious before it is over. And some will assuredly find in it the power of God to stir their very souls to the depths, and even it may be to colour their lives henceforward. Many, too, will come before the

Bishop and before their fellows to declare once for all, and I trust to declare truly, that their choice is made, and that they mean to cling to the good henceforward, and to shun the evil. But now let us look forward beyond this week, and let us suppose that the choice has been made, or, if not now made for the first time, that it has been renewed with more earnestness than before, and that we, who have not now for the first time to profess ourselves servants of Christ, yet with as much eagerness as if it were for the first time, nay, with much more eagerness as knowing better what our resolutions mean, have now promised yet again that we will be the children of light and life, and will live as children of light and life. To what are we to look forward to follow this? Is the battle over? Is there nothing more required but to keep that which we have won? Is the neck of evil broken, so that we can safely walk past it, and care no more for its strength or its poison? Not so. The Christian victory in this life is almost always but the prelude to another conflict. The moment of victory is a moment of double danger, if we let ourselves be off our guard. The very thing that we have to prepare for in this week is not peace to follow but battle. The very use of all appeals to the heart and feelings is to strengthen the will and the conscience against the inevitable assaults of those temptations which we are disposed to think are gone for ever. It would be useless to give us strength, and at the same time to remove from us all demand on that strength. It would be useless to brace up the will, to fire the heart for self-devotion, if self-devotion were forthwith to be

made easy. It will not be made easy. If it were, it would cease to be self-devotion. We are not to prepare for repose. We are to know and put our knowledge full before our minds, so that it may be ready for use when the need comes; we are to know that in front of us lies real hard work, real conflict with our inclinations, a real demand on the truth of our resolutions.

And yet this knowledge should cheer us as well as prepare us. If we have made but poor progress, that is but the groaning which all Christians must be content to utter as long as the body is unredeemed. Granted that much of our past defeat is not due to the weakness of humanity, but to our own fault, to our own want of true will, to our own want of courage, or of manliness, or of humility, or of self-surrender; yet still we may well recognise even in this only as it were an aggravated form of that which all, yes, the best, are suffering from, the power of the sin which dwelleth in us. The whole history of the saints from the earliest days to the present time assuredly teaches this lesson above all others; If you would choose the right, persevere. All, all alike, the better we know their story, repeat the same fact, that the Christian race is won not by a grand and glorious career of brilliant service; when this is the outer show, there is a wonderfully different picture seen within; but through many a halt, and many a stumble, and even many a fall; and with strange imperfection and blindness even to the last; and with weakness, and seemingly wavering purpose, and with much pain at unsubdued faults and follies.

And Christian love and Christian faith is often shown in the return to God in spite of grievous falls, which might seem to have shut the door against all return. Only let him that would win know that to win is to battle to the utmost, and that to stand still is to be beaten.

March 21, 1869.

SERMON XXVII.

PERFECT LOVE CASTETH OUT FEAR.

1 JOHN iv. 18.

'*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*'

THESE very striking words must not be pushed beyond their proper meaning. The Apostle does not say that there is no fear in the man that loves; he says that there is no fear in love. Love is not a compound thing, of which fear is one ingredient. A man may both love and fear; but if he does, his fear is not a part of his love. His love is one thing, and his fear is another thing. And so far as each has the mastery, it thwarts and hinders the other. But the man may feel them both, notwithstanding. Once more, the Apostle does not say that 'love casteth out fear,' but 'perfect love casteth out fear;' and the difference is great. And, lest there should be a mistake, he repeats the same saying in another form, and says that 'He that feareth is not made perfect in love.' You will observe that he does not say, 'He that feareth doth not love at all;' but 'He that feareth is not made perfect in love.' A man's love

may be real and deep, and yet very far from perfect; and, as long as it is imperfect, there will be room for fear. When at last his love has been made perfect, then fear will have been cast out.

It is necessary, then, to see clearly what the Apostle means, to prevent the mistake of supposing that he is here describing, not the state at which every Christian ought to aim, but the state in which every Christian ought at once to be. St. John had come near the end of a long life when he wrote this. Perhaps he always enjoyed, even in early youth, a more heavenly mind than most men. But at any rate he had attained what belongs to the most tried and experienced saint. He wrote quite naturally of the feelings, the hopes, the peace, the love which had become natural to him. And so it came to pass that he describes a Christian state, which seems rather ideal than real to most of us. Yet you will find that he does not overstate; he does not insist that all shall feel at the beginning what he was feeling now near the end; he does not refuse all allowance to imperfection, to inexperience. He tells you what a Christian ought to be, if not now, yet some day. The question is not, have you attained this? but, are you on the way to attain it? This perfect love which casteth out fear may not yet be yours. But are you living so that it will one day be yours? Do you wish that it should be yours? Is it yours occasionally, in your happier moments? To all this, at any rate, you ought to be able to say 'Yes.' For though it be rather a hope than a reality with most of us, yet it ought not to be an

impossible, or altogether a distant hope. This love is not reserved for Apostles. There are hundreds of Christians who really attain to it in the course of their lives; who know their own weakness and folly; who are very sadly conscious of their faults; and yet do trust God's love so entirely, that they lose all sense of fear, and, if He calls them away, are not at all distressed at the thought of death, nor anxious about God's dealing with them, but willingly and peacefully resign all to Him, all fear swallowed up in absolute self-surrender.

What is the fear which perfect love casts out?

The fear that is here spoken of plainly enough is not identical with reverence. It is not the same fear as that which is meant in the command, 'Fear God,' nor is it that which is meant in the ancient saying, 'The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.' The sense of awe and deep reverence is not inconsistent with the most heartfelt love. The overwhelming sense of our weakness, of our nothingness, of our folly, of our unworthiness, has not in it that torment which the Apostle here declares to be inherent in fear. He means here, plainly enough, the dread of punishment, the pangs inflicted by an angry conscience, the terror which makes the soul long to hide away. He means that fear which makes a man look on God's holiness as his enemy, which makes a man anticipate, not loving chastisement, but deserved vengeance. Now, this fear belongs especially to unrepented and unforsaken sin. And it is obvious that as long as there is in the life sin unrepented and unforsaken, so long there will be the liability to this fear,

and so long also will there be an absence of true love. This fear love casts out, because it casts out the sin which causes it. This fear, which springs of remorse, is inconsistent not only with perfect love, but even with a very low degree of any love. A man may have many struggles with himself before he can get rid of a sinful habit. But certainly, as long as he is living in a habit of sin, he cannot be sure that he is true to God at all. I do not say that he is not in any sense true; but I do say that he cannot be sure that he is. The test of loving God is keeping His commandments; and he who goes on sinning is not keeping God's commandments, and therefore has not fulfilled the test.

But love as it grows will assuredly cast out all habitual sins, and will consequently cast out the fear which belongs to them. It will most certainly, as it grows, make a man feel that God is his Father; it will teach a man to trust to God as he would to his father; it will teach a man to receive all that God sends as coming from a loving hand. Is there no fear left? Yes, there is still fear, though of a somewhat different kind. There is precisely the same sort of fear which a son may often feel towards his father. A son may love his father very much, and yet, in a moment of forgetfulness, may do what he knows will give his father very much pain. A son may love, and yet, in a moment of unusual temptation, may disobey him. Still more, a son may love his father, and yet, from stupidity, from not quite seeing the true meaning of what he is doing, from mere blunder, from inattention, from thoughtlessness, may do what

will seriously vex him. And then it is not unnatural for a son to feel a very real fear of seeing his father's face. Perhaps he fears punishment, and cannot bring himself to face it. Perhaps it is not punishment in the ordinary sense that he fears; but it is a severe punishment merely to see the look of vexation, to hear the tone of pain, to miss the loving glance, to miss the familiar welcome. And all this is terrible to think of. There can be no doubt of what he ought to do. He ought to go and tell his fault, and make it at once impossible that any after discovery should shake his father's confidence in him. He ought to allow no barrier to grow up between himself and his father. He ought to bear whatever comes; but he fears, and his love is not perfect enough to cast out the fear. Now, in such a case as this, it would be unjust to say that a son, who had not the courage to tell of his own disobedience or thoughtlessness, had no real love for his father at all; yet, most certainly, the love would be far from perfect. A strong love might feel this fear, but certainly would not indulge it. A brave soldier going into battle may feel terrible qualms, may feel his nerves giving way, may be crossed with cowardly thoughts of flight or submission; but he will hold down his fears with a resolute will, and march forward to his duty in spite of qualms and nervousness. So, too, will a loving son, whatever dread may make his heart sink within him, resolutely compel himself to be open to his father and bear whatever comes of it. And so, too, will a Christian look up to God, even if conscious of

very serious faults, and will resign himself absolutely to God's hands; ready to bear punishment if punishment be sent; ready to take cheerfully and humbly whatever be the consequences of his faults; perhaps, indeed, sometimes positively glad to be punished, since punishment is often, to the true soul, a token of forgiveness; but whether glad of punishment or not, yet at any rate trusting himself absolutely to God's hands, and feeling quite sure that whatever God does, God will do it in love, and will love him through it all, and even on account of it all the more.

Now, in this case it cannot be said that love has cast out fear; it would be nearer the truth to say that love has conquered fear. The fear is still there: still strong enough to cause a very real struggle: still strong enough, it may be, for some time to get an occasional victory; but it is conquered at last. It is conquered, and the servant of God gains an absolute confidence in the Master that he is serving. He fears still, it may be, and is not yet therefore made perfect in love; but nevertheless, he has his fear completely under. He is more truly courageous, indeed, than one whose love is more nearly perfect. For the fear which he has to crush is a very real enemy, and there are moments when he almost feels as if he could not subdue it.

But love, if it be real, will grow stronger yet. A day will come when the Christian soul needs no effort to come to God and say, 'I have sinned; do with me what Thou wilt.' A day will come when love will not only conquer fear, but will take all life from it, will

empty it of all its strength, will make it seem as nothing. Such an one will no doubt still do wrong sometimes, for that is human nature. But there will be no bitterness in the repentance, no torment in the prayer for forgiveness. There will be sorrow, and there will be shame; and there will be, perhaps, expectation of punishment. But there will be nothing that can be called fear in the sense of the Apostle. The penitent will be eager to come to God, forgetting everything but his love, his grief at having disobeyed, his desire to be entirely restored to favour. If punishment is to follow, it will be taken as a matter of course, nay, as a part of that very love which penetrates into all the life. Perfect love will have cast out fear. And at the hour of death the desire to be with the loving God will be stronger than all else, and will thrust aside all other thoughts. Such death-beds there still are amongst us; and such there will be again.

'Perfect love casteth out fear.' How utterly different is this fearlessness from the fearlessness which comes from mere want of thought. Many who live very careless and very useless lives; some, even, who live bad lives, yet show a strange freedom from fear. They are crossed by no anxieties about the other world. They are terrified by no threats of conscience. They enjoy life as it passes by them. They do not think of another world at all, or if they do, they put the thought easily away. And this can go on while the vigour of youth perpetually supplies life with freshness and a sense of secure strength; while the occupations of manhood fill

up the time and fill up the mind, and seem, as it were, to leave no room for unpleasant fears. But, meanwhile, one of two things is sure. Either the conscience is quietly sinking into deadness and hardness, and the whole character is degenerating into selfishness, and the man is losing all nobleness of soul; or else a fearful day of awakening will one day come, and the fears now easily put aside will be a terrible burden on the life. For, certainly, there is but one thing which can keep the heavenly power of conscience alive within the soul, and yet cast out all unworthy fears of God, and that is the growth of perfect love.

May 9, 1869.

SERMON XXVIII.

STUMBLING-BLOCKS IN EACH OTHER'S WAY.

ST. MATTHEW xviii. 7.

'Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!'

THE fault of which our Lord is here speaking plainly admits of very many degrees. It may be a distinct attempt to lead another man to do wrong. It may be that sort of carelessness which without tempting others makes it much more difficult to them to do right. An offence is, as every one knows, a stumbling-block. And a stumbling-block may be either put in a man's path on purpose or left there by negligence, or perhaps left inadvertently, not by negligence but by that blindness which comes of the want of due thought about our duties. In all cases our Lord plainly implies that to leave stumbling-blocks is a fault, and though in some cases it may be a very slight fault, in many it is a very grievous fault. And in all cases our Lord insists on refusing to listen to the plea which instinctively rises to the lips, that the offence would have come anyhow. It is a very natural defence to make if we

have contributed to make a fellow-creature do wrong, that we should say, 'He ought to have taken better care of himself. If he was so weak as to fall before such a temptation, it makes very little difference, indeed it makes no difference at all, that I was the cause of the temptation being there. If I had not put it there, some one else would. And as far as he is concerned it comes to precisely the same thing.' This defence our Lord refuses even to consider. He insists that the sin is just the same whether the sinner would have sinned otherwise or no. He grants that the world is so made that no one can pass through it without meeting with stumbling-blocks, and consequently that there may be some truth in the plea that if one did not put the stumbling-block in the path another would. But He will not allow that this alters the sin. You have no right to put stumbling-blocks in the way, and you must see to it that whoever else may do so you do not. It is not by any means always true that if you do not another will. But even if it were true, you would not be justified. You must not do a wrong thing because somehow or other that wrong thing is almost sure to be done. You are bound to keep your own soul clear from what is a great and plain sin, without any reference to the consequences that may or might come out of your wrong-doing or your right-doing.

Let us examine some of the forms which this fault takes, and some of the circumstances which may lead us into it.

The worst form of all is the distinct endeavour to

get another to do wrong when you know that it is wrong. It is fearful to think that this should be possible, but it is undeniably possible; and in particular circumstances it is not only possible but very tempting. It is done most commonly by those who are doing wrong themselves, and do not like to be alone in wrong-doing. And then it is too often aggravated by being done in the name of friendship. It is very shocking that friendship, which God meant to be one of our greatest blessings, should thus be perverted into the means of a downright curse. But so it is. One who does wrong likes that his friend should join him in doing what he himself is doing. His friend's refusal is a reproach, and a reproach seems inconsistent with friendship. And the choice is offered of giving up the friendship or joining in the wrong. Still more imperatively is this choice sometimes offered when wrong has been done and a friend demands that his friend should wrongly aid him in concealing it. It is clear enough that in such a case a friend has no right to purchase friendship at such a price. It is far indeed from being worth the purchase. A friend who wishes his friend to do wrong in order to save him from detection, shows such utter selfishness as not to be worth having for a friend. But I am not speaking of the duty of the tempted, but of the sin of the tempter. Such a sin as I have been describing, so selfish, so directly in the teeth of conscience, so unmistakeable, ought to be all but impossible. But we know that it is not. The greatest service that the tempted can do to the tempter, the

only true act of friendship, the only true generosity, is to refuse to be tempted at whatever cost: to give up right hand or right eye rather than yield. This, and this alone, can certainly prevent much bitter sorrow afterwards. But the fault of the tempter, what words can describe it? or how is it possible to estimate it? To appeal to friendship for the gratification of such pure selfishness; to call on generosity to listen to such an ungenerous demand; to abuse what is so noble, so excellent as the tie which binds friends together,—it is difficult, when we see this in its true light, to understand how any man can sink so low as to do it. But we know that the natural impulse is strong, and we are bound to be always on our guard lest in some form or other we slip into doing something very like this.

A lower degree of the same fault is to refuse to respect each other's consciences, and to tempt men to do what we do not think wrong, but what they do. Of course it is perfectly legitimate to discuss and examine each other's opinions. If we differ, let us by all means see where we differ, and the reasons why. This is one of the appointed means whereby the conscience is enlightened. If I am narrow-minded and think a thing wrong which is not wrong, it is undeniably a benefit to me that my mistaken scruples should be removed. Narrowness of mind is hurtful to every man, and perhaps even more hurtful to society at large. To insist on a code of right different from God's code is a serious mischief, making the service of God much more difficult than it need be, and therefore than it

ought to be. Or again, if I am lax and think things right which are really wrong, it is of the utmost importance that I should be got to see better. To do wrong in blindness is a very serious thing. Even if it be pardonable, it still most certainly hinders true spiritual growth, keeps the soul from perfect communion with God, lowers the moral nature. And if it be in any degree wilful blindness, it is plainly not pardonable while we persist in it. It is well, therefore, for any one to argue against opinions which he thinks false, to examine the grounds on which they profess to rest, to endeavour to convert those who hold them to a different way of thinking. But all this in no way justifies the attempt to persuade any one to go against his conscience as long as his conscience remains unconvinced. To convince a man that his conscientious convictions are not true is quite a different thing from persuading him to disobey them while he still thinks them true. The fact is, that true Christian society and true Christian friendship cannot exist on any other basis than that of respecting each other's consciences. And it is a most grievous wrong if we fail in this mutual respect.

Yet once more, it is still a fault of the same sort if we make Christian duty and a Christian life difficult to our fellows when we ought to do our best to make it easy. We have very great power over each other in this way. Our tempers, our usual conversation, our usual practices are almost sure to be in some degree a help, in some degree a hindrance to each other.

You may encourage and positively tempt another to very wrong language by habitually showing a weak compliance with it. You may tempt a man to downright wrong by good-naturedly seeming to approve of the wrong. You may make right quite disagreeable by always putting a sour face upon it. You may try to help a friend in such a way as to provoke him or perplex him. You may make demands on his friendship which are more than he can meet. You may say things which you do not really mean, and give him altogether a false conception of your opinions. You may encourage him to treat serious matters lightly even when you do not really wish it. We are bound up in each other, and our lives act and re-act one on another. And we may daily put stumbling-blocks in our way which a little thought, a little unselfishness, a little humility would remove. I quite grant that here we can no longer, as in the two preceding cases, speak of the duty on one side and the sin on the other as unmistakeable. But the spirit which is to rule the life in this case is the same, and it is the application of it to details which alone is no longer so precise. The spirit of Christian duty in this as in all other cases is expressed by St. Paul's words: 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' And the fault is the same in all cases, the fault of being those by whom the offence cometh.

Finally, I have one thing to say on all these cases which greatly needs to be said, lest we forget it in the moment when we are thinking of all this, and that is,

that in all these cases the duty is reciprocal, and if the tempter be sinning against the tempted, so also will the tempted be sinning against the tempter, if he yields. The tempted man who yields is not merely sinning against God and against himself and against his fellow-creatures in general; still more is he sinning against the tempter. His weak compliance puts a crown of evil on the other man's fault. It gives the tempter's sin a completeness and a substance which it would not otherwise have. If the tempted may say to the tempter, 'Had it not been for you I might not have fallen,' so may the tempter say to the tempted, 'You had it in your power to save me from a great evil, and you would not do it.' Each man's conscience in this case will lay a burden on him, and neither shall be allowed to shelter himself behind the thought of the other man's sin. Which sinned most, God and God only can decide. But there is a sin on both sides.

The fact is, that all our relations with each other must stand on a foundation of common obedience to our Master Christ, or they instantly become faulty. Does this seem a truism? does it seem so plain that it is absurd to deny it? Not so. There is much in our relations with each other which in each separate case seems to stand quite apart from our duty to God or to our Redeemer. Friendship seems a thing which is to be valued in itself, whether there be true principle at the back of it or not. Kindness to each other, good-nature, sweetness of temper, willingness to yield, desire to secure each other's countenance and good-

will, desire to promote each other's pleasures, all the pleasantnesses of society; these seem to be independent of any higher law, and to be valuable for their own sake. But we shall assuredly find that there must be right principle at the back, or all these are liable to be snares and pitfalls in our path. No intimate friendship, no social intercourse can be truly sound unless obedience to the law of God rules them throughout. And there is no treason against either friendship or society so great as his who would do wrong or tempt to wrong for the sake of either.

July 4, 1869.

SERMON XXIX.

TRUSTWORTHINESS.

ST. MATT. xxiv. 44.

'Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.'

THE foundation of all sound relations between man and man, and so also between man and God, is trustworthiness. To say of a man that he can be thoroughly trusted is one of the highest forms of praise; to say of a man that he cannot be trusted is one of the severest forms of blame. This is plain enough, and I do not say it because it is not well known, even stale and commonplace, but because it needs to be often repeated, and, however well any one knows it, he may yet be the better for thinking of it, and thinking of its application to his own life. No stress that you can lay upon it will, after all, exceed the stress that is laid upon it in the New Testament, and especially by our Lord. Our Lord makes faith the condition of belonging to Him; to believe is the first thing. Faith is the condition of receiving a sure answer to prayer: 'Believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' Faith is the condition of being healed: 'Be of good comfort; thy

faith hath made thee whole;' and again, 'According to your faith be it unto you;' and again, 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' It is the want of faith that makes Peter sink in the sea: 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?' But in all these cases we see single acts, brief trials; whenever we are bidden to look on to the end, the great test of faith is trustworthiness. Our Lord hides the time of His coming expressly that our trustworthiness may be put to the test, and He bids us always be ready and always watch, because we never know when He is coming. So again, He went away, and when He went He told His grieving disciples that it was good for them. 'It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send Him unto you.' It was good for them that their Lord should go away, and the Holy Spirit come instead; why? because there was one thing which they could learn from the Holy Spirit and could not learn from our Lord, and that one thing was trustworthiness. While our Lord was with them, while He saw them every day, while they lived within the hearing of His voice, while they could ask Him questions and get His directions at any moment, there was no trial of their fitness to be trusted. They might have within them the true love which is the same in absence as in presence. But they might also be under the influence of mere feeling without principle, and be at bottom quite untrustworthy. God, no doubt, could discern which was their real state. But it was good for them that they

should discern it for themselves. It was good for them that what little strength of true principle was in them should be increased by exercise, should have its deficiency detected, and, it may be, healed. It was good for them to learn their own weakness. If they were hardly quite trustworthy yet, in this way alone could they become so.

It is for this reason that at all times all men have felt an instinctive dread of dying in an act of sin, however slight. It is quite true that you may exaggerate this dread beyond reason, and lay a stress on the mere accident of what you happen to be doing at the moment of death, and not sufficiently consider the life as a whole. God, we know, will be absolutely just, and He will see what is the true value of every act of ours, and we have no reason to think that He will lay more stress upon what chances to be the last act than if it had been some other than the last. But what is true in this matter is this. That trustworthiness is tried, and can only be tried, by single acts. To do right almost invariably, and yet to fail in some one instance, may prove nothing more than that you were carried away by some extraordinary accident of temptation. But be very slow indeed to jump at this excuse; for it may prove, and God will see whether it does or not, that you are not trustworthy at all. Trustworthiness can only be known by its standing the strain of severe temptation. Severe temptation does not come often. When it does come it puts a test to the whole character, and, therefore, to the whole life. If you fail, it is quite possible, nay, is it not even probable, that all

your past goodness has been only surface deep? Is it not possible that all the time you have been untrustworthy? Is it not possible that this is just *the* trial that is meant to judge you?

Trustworthiness is complete, or it does not exist. You may trust a man in some things and not in others. You may trust him to face certain temptations, while you are doubtful how he will stand others. But where you do trust, you trust him wholly, or it is not trusting him at all. And so, accordingly, the test of trustworthiness must always be found in single acts. If a man fails even once, your confidence must be shaken. Indeed, unless you are able to suppose some special reason why he failed, your confidence is gone. If he fails twice, it is hardly possible for you to put any confidence in him further. Now just so our Lord warns us that we are to be tested by Him. His coming again will be sudden and unexpected. He will try our trustworthiness by seeing then whether we are ready. If you are then caught doing what He would disapprove, you may plead if you will that it was an accident, and that the accident did not show your true character. But of this He will judge. I do not say that such a plea will be certainly false; but I say that the emphasis, with which our Lord warns us, certainly implies that it will be more often false than true, and that it is a very perilous thing indeed, if you have failed, to say that you nevertheless deserved to be trusted.

Why should so much value be assigned to this trustworthiness? Because it is the thing above all others

which distinguishes the genuine from the sham. You may love warmly, but what is your love worth if you presently forget all about it and do the very thing which will wound the one whom you profess to love? What is your love worth, if when you are away you are at the mercy of every sharp temptation that assails you? What is your love worth in best, if it cannot be trusted as soon as you have been out of sight for a little while? You may repent with much sorrow; but what is your sorrow or your repentance worth if the fault is presently to be repeated? You may resolve nobly and enthusiastically; but what is your enthusiasm and your resolution worth, if it cannot uphold you when you come to action? The one thing which all men will ask of you before they can have much to do with you will be, where and how far you may be trusted. Till they know that, they cannot admit you to any confidence at all. As far as they know that, they can be on friendly terms, perhaps more, on terms of friendship. If you cannot be trusted at all, you are worse to your fellow-creatures than a wild beast. So, too, is it in our relations with God. If you are to be His in any sense, you must learn to be trustworthy. You must learn to obey the bidding of duty even when you are left entirely to yourself. You must learn to care for His will even when you are strongly tempted to disregard it, and when no punishment seems likely to follow your disregard. You must learn to think about His will even when it seems quite impossible that disobedience should be detected. You must learn to obey in little trifles which no one will notice, and all the more

because no one will notice them. Christ has left the world expressly that we might learn trustworthiness, and if we learn it not, no other lesson will make up for it.

There are two, perhaps we may say three, kinds of failure in this point. There is the failure of weakness. You fail, not because you do not try, and try very earnestly; but because you have not the strength that you need. And this, in strictness, is not a failure in God's sight at all. He will not let you fail often in this way. He will let you, perhaps, go to the very edge of failure often; but actual failure He will certainly not permit, if weakness be the only cause. He can uphold the weak, and He certainly will. If you fail often, then be sure that the failure is a real failure, not caused by weakness, but by want of true will. This want of true will is shown in heedlessness, in want of due thought and seriousness, in thinking too lightly of your duty, in hastily shaking off the memory of your own wrong, in running needlessly into temptation. From such causes as this we often fail. And when we do fail, it is useless to plead that it is our weakness; it is want of real trustworthiness. And then, and not far off, comes that breach of trust which, because it is done with full knowledge and with the eyes open, shows that the man is at the bottom unsound. Such an one does evil in secret, and does it often, and does it knowingly, and yet feels no very heavy burden, because his character is distinctly not true. Such an one lives two lives, and hides his real self under a mask. Such an one does not, perhaps, do anything for the express purpose of deceiving; but he does conceal

much of his life, because he knows it to be inconsistent with what he seems to be. Secret sins, whether sins of thought or act; impure imaginations, secret envy, hidden hatred, sometimes coming into acts which cannot be detected, sometimes cherished within the heart alone,—these mark a man untrustworthy in that last and worst degree which makes true service of God simply impossible.

Now, that untrustworthiness condemns a man in God's sight we need no further teaching than the New Testament to show us beyond all manner of doubt. But surely we should know it even without any revelation. What character is more naturally contemptible than that of the man who can never be trusted? Whom do we more naturally avoid? Who is there that is not stung if he finds that his fellows cannot trust him, and doubly stung if he is conscious that he has given them a right to refuse their trust? Other sins may fill the soul with more horror when looked back upon; but no other gives so bitter, so stinging a remorse. Years and years after, when it has been entirely repented of, when it has been entirely forsaken, when the man has felt himself entirely forgiven, yet the memory will return sometimes with a sharp sting, of which, when the sin was committed, the soul that sinned had not the least idea. Nor, on the other hand, has God implanted in the soul of man a higher testimony of the value of any other grace than that which is given by the impulse of the heart to thorough trustworthiness. Self-sacrifice is truly great, and you cannot but bow before its excellence; great,

too, is the beauty of absolute and saintly purity; but to say of a man that he is absolutely pure, to say of him that he utterly sacrifices himself, seems hardly so much as to say that he can be trusted through and through.

And in what school shall we learn this lesson? This lesson is pre-eminently one of those which we have to learn in our intercourse with each other. If you would be trustworthy in the sight of God, learn first to be trustworthy in the estimation of your fellows. Live so that whatever else your faults may be, none shall ever be able to say of you that you cannot be trusted. When you have made yourself trusted by all who know you, then may you hope that you are beginning to learn the true trustworthiness before God Himself. Then may you hope that He will call you not only a good but a faithful servant. Then may you feel that not only do you love Him who first loved you, but that your love is genuine and may be trusted.

July 11, 1869.

SERMON XXX.

THE REWARD OF GOODNESS.

1 CORINTHIANS ii. 9.

'*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.*'

THERE is something very grand, and therefore very attractive, in the old Stoic doctrine, that the truly good man ought to look forward to no reward, inasmuch as goodness is sufficient for itself. The reward of a good deed consists in the having done it. To this nothing can be added. So, too, the reward of a good life is the having lived it. If doing right be in itself the most excellent of all things, how can it expect to gain any attraction by the addition of some consequence to follow? Is it not lowering goodness to give it rewards? Is not all goodness instantly tainted if the man who has it and shows it in his life be, after all, but practising a mere refined selfishness? If we do our Lord's will, not because it is good, not because we love Him whose will it is, but simply because we want to go

to heaven, is there not in this such a stain of self-seeking as to take away all true nobleness from the life? Is the difference between the Christian and the sinner merely that the Christian has made a better bargain? We may find much pleasure in this world by following our inclinations; we may find happiness in the other world by thwarting inclination to follow duty. And is there no other difference between the Christian character and its opposite, except that the Christian looks further on? Is there no such thing in the Christian as *utter* forgetfulness of self? Is there no such thing as a service which serves out of pure love without any thought of self, either in this world or in the next? Is the Christian self-sacrifice *never* complete, never thorough-going, always supplemented at bottom by an idea of payment for every sacrifice? It is true that when the Apostles pleaded for recompense, it was instantly promised. 'We have forsaken all and followed Thee. What shall we have, therefore?' The reply was immediate. 'Every one that hath forsaken house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.' But does this exhaust the whole Christian teaching in this matter? The Apostles, we know, were not yet fully enlightened, and had much to learn. This need not have been—surely this was not—their final lesson on this question. This was no doubt true. And yet this may have been but a part of the truth. Look at St. Paul's notion of the reward that was to be his if he preached the Gospel willingly. He tells us

that he was commanded to preach, and had no choice in the matter. But if he did it willingly, he secured a reward. And what was his reward? To receive no wages. His reward was to be allowed to refuse all reward. Could not that be extended still further? Could not the reward of self-devotion be at last the acceptance of it, pure and simple? Could not self-sacrifice be rewarded by being made complete?

Now, while there is room for this idea in the New Testament, yet it is undeniable that the New Testament does not confine itself to this idea. Why?

In the first place, observe that, as is so often the case with these philosophical theories, even when they are true, this notion does not seem to correspond with the nature that God has given us. It is clear on the face of things that not all men, perhaps very few men, could live by a rule which definitely excluded all consideration of reward for goodness and punishment for wickedness. This is easiest to be seen in the contrary. Punishment of wrongdoing is plainly enough a part, and a necessary part, of the economy of the world. God has constructed the world so that sin shall bring evil consequences on the sinner. And many men are helped to abstain from sin by this arrangement of Providence. Not only are bad men sometimes deterred from committing worse sins than they now do, but men who are not at all bad, who are only weak, men who are struggling, though very feebly, to do right and not to do wrong, find the fear of punishment a real aid. A man is tempted, severely tempted, to be dishonest; but the thought comes to

him that it will be dreadful to face his fellows if he fall and then be detected, and that thought helps him to trample the temptation down. There are many such instances, and he must be a very good man, or have been very little tempted, who has not sometime or other in the course of his life found the possibility of punishment a real aid to his own self-discipline. Now, precisely the same reasoning applies to the other half of the same truth. A man may fix his eyes on rewards of a wrong kind, and of that I will speak presently. But provided he is aiming at a reward which is good in itself, the hope of it may be a real help. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. It is part of our nature to look forward. And we cannot expel any part of our nature, do what we will. And the idea of living absolutely for the duty of the moment without any reference to what may come of it, excellent as it is, yet never will cover all the needs of humanity. It presupposes us to be different from what God has made us. It is not merely our weakness that requires something more; though it is our weakness that most plainly shows the need. But it is that we have within us what cannot be satisfied with this glorious but narrow doctrine.

Yet once more, it is not only our own nature that cannot so be satisfied. The idea seems inconsistent with our fundamental conception of God's nature. Would it be just that there should be no difference between the good and the bad? Would it be just that, in order to make goodness disinterested, there should

absolutely be no consequence to follow on a man's goodness? Would it be just that a bad man should at all times, both here and hereafter, be just as happy as a good man? Would this satisfy our moral sense? Would it not seem to us a blot on God's creation if it were so? And it is useless to say in reply that we have nothing to do with that. On the contrary, deep down in the inmost soul of every man is graven the question once put by Abraham to the Lord Himself, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' It would be utterly impossible for us to go on long believing in a God who was not a God of justice. We *could* not rest quiet in the idea that justice was not the ultimate rule of all things. Quite apart from all consideration of ourselves, quite apart from all care for our own future, we could not acquiesce in the idea that this was the rule by which our Creator was governing His creation. Let it be granted for a moment that it made no difference to us, yet it does make a difference to Him. And this we cannot forget.

Yet again, the doctrine that the reward of goodness is the being good, almost always comes round to selfishness, though of a different kind from that against which it protests. For it is one thing to seek no reward at all, quite another thing to seek in goodness the reward of itself. And if you were to seek a reward in the bare fact of having done right, you would find that in so doing you had been selfish, inasmuch as this reward is an isolated and therefore selfish thing. It is a reward that you do not share with any one. It is a reward that,

so far as it goes, cuts you off from every other living thing. It does not unite you either to man or to God. It bids you be and do. But whatever be the process, if your own individual being and doing be the ultimate aim, this is a selfish aim. There is such a thing as a selfish self-discipline. There is such a thing as a selfish desire for righteousness. There is such a thing as a selfish desire to be good and to do right. You may call it a very lofty kind of selfishness. But it remains selfish still, if it is only yourself after all that you are contemplating. If you have no thought to spare for anything in the last resort but your own right doing, beware lest you have not let selfishness rule your life in the cloak of self-sacrifice. To look forward to excellence of life, and to care for nothing else provide you attain to that, is, after all, selfish. But if it be answered that a man who aims so must by necessity of nature seek the happiness and good of others at the same time, then that happiness and good of others will be the reward of his excellence, and he will assuredly get it.

Here, then, we see how it is that the Gospel reconciles these two conflicting ideas of the reward of true service. The reward of true service of God is, if we are to express it briefly, the love of God; and of course in that is included the love of His creatures and the love of His will. And so the peculiarity of this reward is, that it cannot be selfishly sought, nor when it is attained can it be selfishly enjoyed. We speak of the happiness of heaven. We have nowhere any clear conception of

what that happiness shall be. But we know one part of it for certain, and only one, and that is, that we shall love God and shall feel deep in our hearts that He loves us. While we are aiming at winning His approval, while we are endeavouring to please Him, while we are forgetting ourselves in obedience to His will, we are more truly and completely unselfish than if we were trying to win the loftiest of characters for ourselves. The New Testament offers a reward; but instead of falling below the Stoic idea in doing so, the New Testament rises above that idea. Simply to seek for rest from pain, for rest from the never-ending battles with ourselves, for freedom from the many unhappinesses of life, this has nothing wrong in it. And the Christian who comes to the Lord because he is weary and heavy laden, and hopes to find in his Redeemer comfort and joy, shall certainly not be turned away and told that he is selfish. No, he will be accepted and will be strengthened, and by-and-by will be taught to rise to a higher aim, and to hope for a more excellent reward. So the Christian who longs to render worthy service, and would fain make himself a noble creature, and train himself to great self-devotion, and endeavour to look for no reward at all beyond the fact that he is doing God's will, he, too, shall be accepted, and helped, and his devotion shall not be refused; and yet, as he labours to reach his aim, his eyes shall be enlightened to see something yet more excellent. For still the highest aim of all is to forget self altogether, and to ask only to love and to be loved. In this the Christian will find some

day what he cannot quite find out now—the solution of all these questions. In this he will assuredly find at once the most unselfish and yet the most self-satisfying of all rewards. For this is the peculiar property of true love, that it unites in itself absolute happiness with absolute unselfishness.

July 18, 1869.

SERMON XXXI.

UNION WITH GOD.

JOHN xv. 4.

'Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.'

THE root of all true spiritual life must be in God Himself. Isolated, independent life in each individual man is conceivable in thought, but revelation and experience concur in teaching us that it is never found, and in fact cannot exist. There is but one real source of good. And if there be any good in us it must have come, and it must continue to come, from that source. In this passage our Lord claims to be Himself that source of spiritual life to us, and plainly He makes the claim as being the human manifestation of the divine nature. He exhibits to us what God is, so that He could say to Philip, 'He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father.' And in this character He is the fountain of life, and to be united to Him is to be united to God. And in being so united to God through Him

consists, according to the revelation of the New Testament, the true life of man.

Let us think of this for a little.

If we leave out of our lives all that is wrong in them and think only of what is unreproved by our consciences, we see in the first place that a large proportion of all that we do is in a sense mechanical, and has no conscious principle or purpose. I say no *conscious* principle or purpose, because I am very far from saying or thinking that there is really no purpose or principle latent in this part of our lives. But I mean that we have no distinct intention in it. It is the working of habit. We do to-day what we did yesterday. We have very good reasons possibly, but we do not think of those reasons. We do one thing after another because in each instance this thing or that thing is the next to be done. We may have underneath this a very high purpose; we may have no purpose at all, but have slipped into a custom by accident or by imitation of others. It is impossible to say, if this part of the life be looked at quite alone, what is the true character of it. It may be worth a good deal; it may be worth very little. But anyhow it forms a very large part of life: and it is evidently intended that it should. There would be no steadiness, no consistency in the life of most men if this were not so. There would be no possibility of living together in comfort if habit did not make a large part of every man's life tolerably regular. And if this part of a man's life is on the whole good, and such as becomes a true man and a

servant of God, it would be absurd to say that this was not a great blessing to him and to those with whom he lives. But, on the other hand, this taken by itself does not imply true spiritual life. If it be good as far as it goes, it is a great aid to spiritual life; but you cannot for certain say more. It may probably be the result of careful discipline, and of nothing more.

If we rise a step higher we find a good deal of what our consciences would not only not censure but positively approve due to good impulses and instincts. There is such a thing as a natural impulse to be kind, to be generous, to be truthful, to be just, to be pure. Some men have these impulses more strongly than others by nature. Moreover, some men have some of them and others have others of them. One man seems to grow up with a natural horror of impurity; another with a natural love of justice; another with a natural inclination to be kind. Now these natural gifts of goodness seem to stand above mere habits in one respect, below them in another. They seem to have more of life in them, more of the heart; to be more truly human and less mechanical; to be more attractive; to speak more directly to the feelings of those we live with. But they are also less steady and less trustworthy. Some of the early Christian teachers speak of these gifts as being not good at all; mere delusions. St. Augustine seems to speak of some forms of them, such, for instance, as the noble patriotism and self-devotion of the classical heroes, as splendid sins. I cannot think this. Rather, it seems to me that when St. James tells us that 'every good gift is from above and cometh down from

the Father of lights,' we must include these among the good gifts. That such gifts are the very greatest of all aids to the Christian soul is a fact of daily experience, and if so they must be in their own nature good. But though good gifts in themselves, they do not constitute the Christian character. This is proved by the fact that very often these gifts are found in men who are not living nor trying to live good lives. Men will live in sin, sometimes in open sin, more often in secret sin, and yet be stirred by very good impulses. We constantly shall find people who are not living at all as they should, and who nevertheless have, as it is said, much good in them. They show sparks of spiritual life as it were. They sometimes show an unexpected reverence for holiness; an unexpected depth of feeling; emotions of penitence; longings for release from bondage; wishes for a better life; and yet all the while persist in bad ways. And this is enough to prove that we cannot call these mere impulses to good—however useful, however attractive, however beautiful—true spiritual life.

We rise one step higher, and we come to what must be called the life, not of impulse, but of principle. We may not often be called on in the course of the day to act consciously on principle at all. The fact is, that that mechanical part of our life of which I spoke first ought to be the result and the expression of our principles. And if our principles be really strong and clear and true, it invariably will be. A man who acts on principle will act steadily, and his actions will consequently

settle down into a definite channel, and he will form habits, and those habits will express his principles. But every now and then will come temptations to depart from the right, and these temptations will be sometimes very strong, and then will be seen whether our right doing be a mere result of imitation, of accident and circumstances, of discipline and training, or of true principle. For true principle will hold its own against temptation, will fight a hard battle, will often win a complete victory: mere habit, with nothing behind it, will soon give way. The man who acts from true principle is he whom we call a conscientious man. His conscience is the rule of his life. He has of course the aid of whatever good impulses God has given him by nature, and he does right with ease and force when the right thing is of the sort that tallies with his own natural bent. But he also obeys his conscience when he has no such aid. He tells the truth when his weak nature shrinks from it. He does the just thing when his secret inclinations are longing to sacrifice justice to some special wish of his own. He rules his passions when they are strong within him. He endeavours to follow that eternal law of right which he finds written down on his heart by God Himself.

Now is not that enough? Can there be anything yet higher? Is not the conscientious man the truly good man? Can there be anything above the eternal moral law? or any rule of life more excellent than obedience to it? Or can he be said to lack any-

thing of true spiritual life who has attained to this point?

I do not think that there can be any doubt that the conscientious life, even if it be nothing more, is, as far as it is conscientious, true spiritual life. It exactly corresponds to the account which St. Paul gives of the faithful Gentiles, who having not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, and are therefore a law unto themselves. A truly conscientious man must have within him a motion from God Himself. His life must really flow from the source of all life. It is assuredly good. But yet it is not the highest, and we may well doubt whether it be possible for any man to stand at that point and neither rise above it nor sink below it. For in itself it does not recognise, what nevertheless sooner or later must be recognised, the true and only source of whatever strength it has. The conscientious man may possibly live some time in the diligent endeavour to obey the highest law that he knows. He may fight many battles with evil and win many victories. But if ever a time of searching temptation comes and reveals to him the true depths of his own nature, he will assuredly find that he has not within himself enough for his spiritual need. He has his conscience, and he has the knowledge of the law of right, and he has the free will which marks him as a spiritual being, and yet he will learn that all this is not enough, and that moral strength cannot be got in the last resort except by going out of himself and seeking a union with God. I do not say that even

before he finds this out he has not been united to God. I do not say that God does not supply spiritual power to many who do not know who it is that so blesses them. I do not say that men are never branches in the true vine without being themselves aware of it. Rather, I am quite sure that many who know it not yet are really grafted into the spiritual vine and derive from it a heavenly vigour. But far, far more blessed are those who not only derive from God the true strength of their life, but who know from whom that strength comes. All spiritual blessings have at once a marvellous increase of power over the soul, when we become distinctly conscious of them. God in His overflowing mercy gives Himself to many even when they do not know that He is moving their hearts. For we are plainly told that 'He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him,' and there is no word to limit this to those who are conscious of the source of their love. But how much fuller is his blessing, how much greater his strength, how much surer his confidence, who not only is upheld by God's almighty hand, but knows the hand which upholds him, and knows that it can never fail!

Hence at all times do we need to be reminded to seek that union which alone is the permanent source of life. Granted that God gives it to us sometimes when we do not seek it: so indeed He gives many of His best blessings. Yet He reserves a special blessing for those who seek it. It is not enough to be conscientious. Let us press on to be religious: that is, to

pray heartily for strength, to confess our sins to our Heavenly Father, to make it the purpose of our lives to please Him, to recall to our memories the Cross which seems to set forth all love that ever was in one single act, and so at last to teach ourselves to be His children. If we can really learn that lesson we have little else to learn.

September 19, 1869.

SERMON XXXII.

DOING EVIL THAT GOOD MAY COME.

ROMANS iii. 7, 8.

'*For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto His glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.*'

IN this place St. Paul is supposing a Jew to argue against being put on a level with the Gentiles and judged just like them, by urging that the wickedness of a Jew added glory to God, inasmuch as it showed that God's promise to Abraham was kept in spite of every reason to break it. The lie of the Jew made the truth of God all the more conspicuous, for it showed that whatever man might do, God would keep faith still. For this reason, the wickedness of a Jew ought not to be reckoned as a sin, but rather as a service to God; and ought not therefore to be punished. To keep faith with a man who has not kept faith with you is surely all the more conspicuous excellence. This excellence would shine brightly if God kept His promise

to Abraham's children when Abraham's children were not keeping their promises to Him. And therefore it would be the right thing for a Jew to sin in order to set forth the more conspicuously God's unbroken truth. To this monstrous perversion of the nature of God's promise, and to the inference deduced from it, St. Paul returns no answer except to say of the men who argued thus, 'whose damnation is just.' It is not worth while to argue. The man who pleads such a plea is contradicting a fundamental rule of right, and is condemned of necessity.

But while thus condemning without further discussion the proposal to do evil that good may come, especially in such a fearful form as that supposed, St. Paul tells us in a parenthesis that his own teaching was sometimes charged with the very false principle which he is here indignantly condemning. There were some who slanderously reported that his own teaching admitted and sanctioned this very principle.

There were two ways in which St. Paul's teaching presented this appearance.

In the first place, he taught that God's grace was especially shown in the conquest of sin. It is by enabling us to cast out evil from within, it is by giving us a superhuman strength in fighting inward battles, it is by carrying us unharmed through severe temptations, it is by enabling us to repent and come back to our Heavenly Father, that the Cross of Christ, and the love that flows from that Cross, and the grace of God which ever seems to be kindled into life and force by that

Cross, reveal to us their heavenly power. Most men seem to know the redemption best by knowing from what inward evils it has set them free, or is in the act of setting them free. Most men measure God's grace by their own temptations. So far as a man lives a perfectly smooth and untempted life, it seems as if he would know nothing of a Redeemer. And St. Paul, when he sets himself to describe how *he* first knew the power of Christ, can do nothing but describe the sin with which he had to struggle and the only means that he had found to attain to victory. If a man instead of looking within himself looks to the experience of others, he finds a great deal of the same sort. The Pharisees were doubtless much more careful of their lives than the publicans and harlots. Yet the publicans and harlots, we are told, went into the Kingdom of Heaven before the Pharisees. In the parable of the Prodigal Son the sinful younger brother is made more attractive to us than the more obedient elder brother. How very natural the inference is that there is as it were something good in sinning! Where sin abounded, St. Paul says, there grace did much more abound. How very natural the inference that in some way it is good to sin that grace may abound! Is there not something warm in repentance? is not the heart more tender, the love more grateful, the spirit more touched, when we repent than when we obey? And is it not therefore somehow better to disobey and repent than to obey and have no need of repentance?

This inference from St. Paul's teaching was ascribed

to St. Paul directly, and it was said that his doctrine amounted to saying, 'Sin, and God will give you grace;' or in other words, 'Do evil that good may come.'

Of course the true answer is that you need not have the slightest fear that your obedience will make your heart cold, or will ever shut out the need of repentance. Obey to the very utmost of your power, and you will still find as long as you are in this world that you do wrong quite often enough to make repentance perpetually needful. Obey to the very utmost, and you will still find that the Prodigal Son is not so very unlike you in his sin, and that you have need to be like him in your repentance. If indeed your obedience could rise to that high level where repentance ceases, you would certainly find in it a spring of life and love and warmth such as would lift the soul to heaven. But that will not be quite fully here. Obey to the very utmost, and you will still have many occasions to win the grace which is given to the penitent. What you have to guard against is not obedience but the pretence of obedience. The publicans and harlots were preferred to the Pharisees. But why? Not because the publicans and harlots sinned and the Pharisees did not, but because the sin of the Pharisees was of a peculiarly hardening and deadening kind. There is no more dangerous disobedience than that which looks better outside than inside. It silences the conscience; it crusts over the heart; it shuts out the best influences of Heaven. Whether it be worse or better in itself I need not

discuss; but it is peculiarly mischievous in its consequences.

There is another sense besides the one that I have described in which St. Paul's teaching would seem to be open to the charge of 'doing evil that good may come.' For the preaching of liberty of conscience, which he certainly preached, often appears to involve a plain toleration of evil. St. Paul's own followers pushed his doctrine so far that he was obliged to lay great stress on the necessary qualifications of it. He taught that all things are lawful. But he was obliged to remind his converts that the Christian was bound to add—sometimes, all things are not expedient; sometimes, all things edify not; sometimes, I will not be brought under the power of any. In short, if liberty be allowed, that liberty will sometimes be abused, and those who have it will do wrong. Hence it seems as if to allow liberty is to sanction wrong doing; for it certainly has the result of allowing wrong to be done which would not be done otherwise. And those who advocate a stricter system are always ready to urge that they cannot in conscience sanction the wrong which would be the inevitable result of allowing liberty; to them such permission of wrong seems to be 'doing evil that good may come.'

Of course the fact is that God has made each man within certain limits responsible for himself, and that you cannot and ought not to take that responsibility from him. You have no right to do so even in order to make him do what you think right; and if you do,

it is you who are 'doing evil that good may come,' for you are trenching on what does not belong to you in order to prevent some evil.

Thus was it that St. Paul was accused of teaching, 'Let us do evil that good may come.' But he not only did not teach it, he would not even discuss the possibility of teaching it. The thing was too plainly abhorrent to the will of God to allow God's servant to speak of it except as utterly unjustifiable.

And yet do not let us be too ready to fancy that a thing so plainly wrong can have no temptations for us, until after we have gone far away from the right path and have dimmed the sight of our consciences. The temptation is common, and besets good men as well as bad. There certainly are cases in which a superficial and careless glance at the circumstances may make us fancy that something really quite right is a 'doing of evil that good may come.' For it is quite certain that a great many things, very many more than we think at first, are not right or wrong in themselves, but only because they produce certain consequences. And in all these cases it is quite possible that what would generally be wrong because its consequences are generally evil, may become right in a particular instance because in that particular instance the consequences are good. But I only say this to guard against hurried judgments of other people. In regard to the sin itself, of 'doing evil that good may come,' each man *must* be left to his own conscience to decide whether what he seems inclined to do is rightly to be put under this

head or not. And on the whole we shall find that there are two chief forms of this temptation: one is the inclination to be false in order to gain some good end; the other is to be unjust and tyrannical in order to compel some right course. To be false in order to gain a good end seems impossible to a right-minded man; but consider how many degrees of falsehood there are. Perhaps you will not tell a lie; but may you not mislead, may you not flatter, may you not be insincere, may you not, in short, be wanting in what your own conscience will call real truth of life, in order to bring about what perhaps is an excellent end? This is not Christian. Granted that there are many degrees of it. Granted that it may in some cases be much more wrong than in other cases. I am not speaking here of the degree of wrong, but of the kind of wrong. And in kind it belongs to the class of which St. Paul could only say, 'whose damnation is just.' Or again, to take the other form. This perhaps is much more tempting to most good men. To do injustice seems much less degrading than to be false in even ever so slight a degree. Yet here, too, the same rule applies. You cannot plead goodness of aim to justify injustice. God will not accept your good result if bought at such a price; no, not even if you have got it with absolutely no selfish motive and with a pure desire for His service. He will not have such service.

But, lastly, if this is what we have to say when the end is really good for which the price of falseness or injustice has been paid, what shall be said of the far

more numerous instances in which the end is at bottom selfish; in which, under pretence of desiring to get a good end, we are really at the bottom of our hearts seeking to gratify our own whim, to have our own way? Against this, Christians, keep an earnest watch; lest to you be applied in all their force the stern words, 'Whose damnation is just.'

September 26, 1869.

SERMON XXXIII.

RELIGIOUS LIFE VERY OFTEN UNATTRACTIVE.

2 CORINTHIANS xii. 10.

'*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*'

THESE words have in them to most ears somewhat of an unpractical sound. I do not mean that they sound to any as if they were not real and practical in the highest degree when they were written. But they seem to belong to St. Paul, and not to an ordinary Christian; to St. Paul's days and not to ours. In his life, since he was an Apostle and had the Christian Church to found, there was a perpetual demand for spiritual heroism of the hardest kind; and he was compelled by his extraordinary duties to be subject to extraordinary rules. But we are not apostles, and what applies to apostles will not by any means always apply to us.

Now this is all true, and yet the words are not unpractical even if we apply them to our own daily life. This is, in fact, one of those cases of which we may find

not a few, in which the New Testament puts before us an ordinary motive of conduct so intensified in its working, so transformed, as it were, by the surrounding circumstances, that at first sight we do not recognise it at all. Yet it is good to recognise it, and to see that what is required of us every day is fundamentally the same with that which constituted the most marked characteristic of the life of an Apostle.

The principle is, in reality, very wide, and has many applications beyond that which St. Paul gives it here; and it is this, that true success and true progress is not to be found in that which we do with ease and with pleasure, not in that which at the time makes an impression on all beholders, not in that which most satisfies our own imaginations, but most often in that which seems dull and uninteresting and unattractive, and not far removed from failure. In our studies we are most caught by what is new and original, by what is large and seems to cover a wide range of truth, by what is striking by its contrast with our ordinary knowledge. But every one knows who knows himself that there is no such thing as true progress in study unless nine-tenths of all our learning be of that painstaking mechanical sort which seems never to have any interest in it at all. The painter must pass most of the time that he gives to the study of his art in mechanical practice. So, too, must the musician. The student of history finds his knowledge worthless unless he has filled his memory with the facts, and what is striking and original in what he reads or what he hears is valuable to him in precise proportion to the labour

that he bestows on the mechanical toil of acquiring accurate acquaintance with details. The scholar may make much show for a time, but is certain to be utterly beaten at last unless he has got that accuracy which can only be got by mere labour. All through, that which is truly interesting is invariably found to have no value except what it derives from its having, as it were, incorporated into itself that which seems to have no interest whatever. When we pass from study to active life we still find the same law, if possible more invariable, more merciless. Far the larger part of all really good work done in the service of either God or man is what would be called drudgery, and the man who shrinks from that makes the rest of far less value. The man who merely draws the outline and does no more, does not really know what he is doing, and cannot therefore do it as it ought to be done. In all these cases we are sometimes entirely taken in by seeing a man on this occasion or on that doing with success precisely what I am now saying cannot really be done. But watch closely and you will see that wherever this has been the case (as it certainly is sometimes) the man who does it owes the power of doing it to the fact that it is not his habit to do it, that he has trained himself for years by painstaking toil, and that he is, as it were, in this particular case using a store of previously accumulated material. A great general does not in all cases go into minute details in giving his orders, but he would most certainly cease to be a great general before very long if he allowed disuse of precise details to continue

till he became ignorant of them. A great legislator can give the idea of a law and leave others to fill in the details, but his laws would certainly at last be worth very little if this were his invariable practice. Of all men he who has to rule is the most apt to forget this and to think that if he orders well his function is done. But St. Paul wisely makes it the special characteristic of a good ruler that he rules with diligence; because it is precisely in diligence that he fails who fancies that good rules will work themselves, and he need not attend to their working. In short, in all these cases, whether in that study which is to fit us to do work hereafter, or in that work itself, we shall find that that which inspires and seems to carry us along, that which gives us the sense of success, that which makes us conscious of either learning something or doing something, is sure to be a delusion unless there is present to us in far larger proportion that which gives us in itself no pleasure at all, but has to be done from a bare sense of duty.

It is this principle transformed by its application to the highest of all matters with which we have to do that also comes into play in our spiritual life, and which made St. Paul say what he did about infirmities and reproaches and persecutions. There is in the spiritual life precisely the same distinction between the dull and uninteresting on one side, and the inspiring and attractive on the other. And St. Paul was tempted, as we all are tempted, to see God only in the latter. When our duty uplifts us, when we rise high above all temptations, when we are conscious of doing something worth doing, when we are thrilled

with generous emotions, with devout fervour, when our spiritual life seems to have in it that sort of swing and force which carries the soul over all difficulties, when the victory over what is wrong in us seems to be visibly ours, then, indeed, if we be of a religious temper, we see the goodness of God in leading us to Himself; and the thought is comfort, and peace, and inspiration. But that is not the whole of religious life, no, nor yet the larger part of religious life. To a man of St. Paul's temper, laying as he did a special stress on success, and looking on the Churches that he had founded as the seals of his Apostleship, there must often have been a peculiar pain in his failures. When he met with persecution where he expected to win converts, when his work seemed proved by the event to have been badly done, when his own personal infirmities had hindered his labours and made him wish with much pain that this word had not been said or that step had not been taken, it is likely enough that he was sometimes troubled with doubts whether indeed his Master was always with him, whether in some instances he had not been really and not only seemingly left to himself, whether it was not in consequence of some terrible deficiency that there should ever be any times when his heart sank and his courage wavered. We cannot compare ourselves with St. Paul, nor find anything in our lives which it would not be somewhat absurd to put side by side with these troubles of his. But in our measure we too, for all that, are subject to this temptation. A large part of our spiritual life is full of failures, or of successes so little removed

from failure that we sometimes think downright failure would be better; a large part of our duty seems to have no direct consciousness of God in it at all, but to be dry and dull routine; there are numerous little battles to be fought which vex us by their very pettiness, give us no pleasure if we win and much discomfort if we lose; there is often a sense of coldness and of not really feeling sure that we belong to God at all; there are sometimes strange fears and qualms about ourselves which seem to say that all is not right, and yet do not show how the right is to be attained; there is a sense of a want of religiousness about our daily conduct; there is a sense of littleness, of spiritual poverty, of a want of all enthusiasm: even our spiritual progress often seems mechanical, and if we be in any way freer from faults than we were, it seems due to some change in our circumstances rather than to any change in ourselves. And so in numberless ways we find that here also the dull and uninteresting and uninspired and, as it seems to us, unheavenly, is a large part of religious life, and we cannot but doubt whether this be of any use to our spiritual growth, and whether it is possible that God is present to us even here.

Yes, even here, perhaps more here than anywhere else, our Master is present with the soul and making it His own. St. Paul was bidden to find Christ's power just where he was naturally inclined not to look for it; not only, that is, in the most successful part of his work, but also in the least successful; not only in that great victory over himself which once seemed to him to be relief from hopeless bondage, but in infirmities which depressed his

spirit. And we must find our Redeemer's power not only in the good thoughts that sometimes seem to lift us toward heaven, not only in the moments when heaven seems all around us, but in the steady dull perseverance which staggers and stumbles through uncongenial duty, in the mere routine of ordinary religious life, in the obedience which we are enabled to render when it is utterly distasteful. We too, if we are to be Christians, must learn not even to wish that all things disagreeable and uncongenial should be taken out of our life, not even to wish that we should always find duty delightful and attractive, not even to wish that we should never have to do what is dull, or what depresses us, or what seems at the moment to do us no good. Rather, we must accept what God puts before us, not merely with resignation but with cheerfulness, recognising that even what seems to us so unsuited to our nature often has a use that we do not at first sight perceive, and recognising still more assuredly that God is with us in all that He sends, not only in that which seems to us quite full of fire from heaven, but also in that which shows no other visible trace of His presence except that it is His appointment. For there is no bound to His love, and no intermission in His care, and it is absolutely certain that He is with us whether we see His face or not.

October 3, 1869.

SERMON XXXIV.

ADVENT SUNDAY.

JOHN v. 28, 29.

'The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.'

THERE can be no mistake about the doctrine of the New Testament on the nature of the ultimate judgment of men. Men shall be judged by the lives that they have lived. For the purposes of that judgment all else will be excluded. If you plead wishes to do right, the question will be what effect had those wishes on your life? If you plead feelings, emotions, aspirations; if you plead sorrow for the past, passionate repentance, tears of grief; if you plead resolutions of amendment, promises sincerely made; if you plead prayers and frequent use of holy words and study of holy books; if you plead that you have always called yourself a servant of the Lord; still the test of all these pleas will be, how have they affected your life? Nay, if you plead the very Cross of Christ, still more will the question be, what right have

you to plead it? what has it been to you? what has it done for you? from what sin has it weaned you? out of what depth has it raised you? from what stain has it cleansed you? It can cleanse no doubt, but have you let it cleanse? It can draw you to God as nothing else can draw you, but have you let it draw you? How can you plead it if you have never made it your own, and how can you have made it your own, if it has not made any difference in your life?

Now, at this season of Advent, we are bidden to look forward to this very judgment, and it is perfectly clear that the best preparation for such a judgment is to anticipate it, to judge ourselves by it, to stand already in thought before the tribunal and ask what its sentence will be. And this being so, there will be at this time a peculiar character in a Christian's self-examination, in his repentance, in his resolutions.

For a Christian's examination at this time will be much severer, and at the same time at a much lower level, than at other times. I say it will stand at a much lower level; and I mean that a Christian at such a time will look very closely whether he be not guilty of faults which seem altogether incompatible with any reality whatever of Christian principle. For the fact is, that whatever seeming there may be, Christians do sometimes slip not merely into sins, but into habits of sin which at other times they themselves would be ready to pronounce unpardonable. Is it conceivable that any one should call himself a Christian, and yet lie or steal? that a Christian should harbour unclean thoughts? that a Christian should

be greedy or selfish? that a Christian should be envious? that he should slander, or be underhand? that he should be intentionally unfair? Is this conceivable or not? Yet look closely now, and see whether you are really quite free from faults like these. Let us just now leave out of sight whether we have got beyond these elementary things. Let us not inquire whether we have so subdued all inclinations that the service of our Lord is our one great object. Let us not inquire whether to love the Lord be to us more than anything else on earth. Let us just see whether those sins which even a heathen would have known to be sins be cleansed out of our lives. And while we seek for an answer to this question we are clearly bound to be very stern with ourselves. The standard is not high; but in proportion it ought to be strict. This is not a time for palliating, putting soft names on what we have done or perhaps are actually doing, ascribing our worst faults to the temptations and not to ourselves, pleading that many others do the same, avoiding the thought, hiding our lives from our own eyes. No, rather let us imagine our lives laid before other people. Imagine, for instance, your whole life, inner and outer; temptations, struggles, falls, victories; thoughts, feelings, wishes, acts; imagine it all laid bare before your father or your mother; and try to fancy what would be the expression of the face when it was so laid open. Or if your parents are dead, imagine that God now gave them the power of seeing you as you really are, and judging you by the bare and exact truth. Set before you the look of sorrow, or of shame, or of deep pain, with

which those loving eyes would see perhaps that which they had never suspected before. Imagine the deep disappointment with which they would discover how little they knew you, how much was wrong of which they never dreamt. Imagine how their love would be keener, and tenderer, and gentler than ever, and yet wounded and cut to the quick even by reason of its own truth, at seeing much that they would have to see. It is by such a rule that Christians should judge themselves at the season of Advent: for by a rule like that shall they be judged when they stand before our Lord.

Yet again, as our self-judgment should have a peculiar character, so should our repentance. There are times when the chief part of repentance seems to consist of sorrow, when the most important thing is that the heart should be softened, the feelings deeply moved. Moreover, there are faults which most need this kind of repentance. Perpetual coldness, hardness, obstinacy in neglecting duty, pride, frivolity, many other sins such as these seem to need a kind of change not so much in the life as in the quality of the character. And this change is best brought about by that which moves the soul, and stirs up the depths of the nature. But at this time the repentance should be of a simpler, severer sort. What is wanted especially at this season is amendment. Not to grieve over faults so much as instantly to amend them. Some of them are such as we can amend at once without waiting a day. Some very likely are what we may call intermittent faults, and only beset us occasionally, and we cannot therefore test our amendment till the next

occasion shall have come. But in all these cases the repentance will take the same form; to forsake these faults from the very moment that our examination shows them to be in us. The repentance that belongs to Advent should be sharp and decisive. Very likely it may make no difference which any one can see; but for all that the difference ought to be real. Especially beware of thinking this repentance complete because you have *tried* to amend. To try is only enough if in God's judgment you have tried your best, and *you* never can know that you have tried your best until you have conquered. If you use the plea that you have tried your best to quiet your own conscience, you may be quite sure that you have not tried your best. The fact that you are using such excuses to yourself is a proof that you are acquiescing in your own defeat. Beware once more lest you be content with half curing faults of the kind that I am now speaking of: beware of curing the deeds or words when the thoughts remain as bad as ever. No, these elementary faults must be rooted out with all our strength, and if possible no vestige left; so that you could say to your own mother, if your whole life lay quite bare before her, 'This life is faulty in many ways, but it will neither shock nor pain you.'

Lastly, at this time there ought to be a peculiar character in our resolutions. For the resolutions that belong to this time ought to have about them that quiet firmness which belongs to a real intent. When we call on ourselves, as no doubt we ought to call on ourselves, for more ardour, more enthusiasm; when we aim at

excellence, at a high ideal, it is not perhaps blameable if our resolutions are half hopes, half fears, if we are conscious that perhaps what we desire is only half attainable, if we determine to do our best, but seem to know beforehand that our best will after all be very short of our conceptions. But this is not the character that befits Advent resolutions. The faults that we find when we examine our lives in the way that I have been describing are such as we unquestionably can conquer, in course of time, absolutely, if we choose. The resolution needed is not to do this if we can, but to do it. In this as in all cases we can do nothing without the aid of that spiritual power which comes from God Himself, and which is the support of the soul's life. And God will let us fall again and again until we have learnt our need of communion with Him. But this remains true in all cases. What especially belongs to such faults as I am now speaking of is that they can be overcome for certain, if we choose to overcome them. A man's want of zeal, or coldness of heart, or slowness of right instinct, or poverty of spiritual nature, or blindness of spiritual sight, or want of true courage, or narrowness of mind, or want of sufficient energy, all these are much less put within his own control; and faults like these a Christian can strive against and pray against, but cannot be sure that God will give him the means of really subduing. But not so when a man sets himself to those elementary duties by which the life must be ultimately judged. In these a man can always do something real at once, and can always win a complete victory at last. And many a one hurts his own

progress by assuming that he cannot do what he has not yet done, but what, notwithstanding all his failures, by God's help sure to be given, he can do.

And now, in conclusion, I have this to add. I have been speaking all through of this self-judgment as if it were quite certain that every one will find much to condemn in his own life if he look at his discharge of the common primary duties. And I have no doubt at all that every one will find something to condemn, and that most of us will find much. I have no doubt that the test which I have supposed to be applied to our lives, namely, a complete revelation to a father or a mother, would show a great deal that was most painful, most disappointing. But I must not be misunderstood. I do not mean that such a judgment will invariably end with a decision in the case of each soul, that the life is unchristian, and that there is no evidence that we belong to God. Nor do I mean that a child of God shall not feel after such a scrutiny that he is a child of God, though a very faulty one. No; if the scrutiny is honest, the judgment will certainly pronounce that there are grave faults that need instant correction, but God's love will have shown its tokens too, and we shall see in the record of temptations mercifully removed or sometimes overcome, of struggles in which we have fought hard to do the right thing, in victories too, and old faults forsaken, that God's love has never forsaken us, but that we are held in the hollow of His hand, safe as yet, though not deserving to be safe. It is indeed that love which makes the soul long to purify itself, so as to receive it in ever fuller measure. If God

loves us, as He does, how can we go on shutting out His love by allowing evil things to grow in the garden of the soul? How can we be content with anything which hides from us the brightness of His smile? How can we bear that our Lord should look on us with sorrow in His loving eyes? For, after all, when we come before Him, there can be nothing else to be compared with the thought that He loves us, and that His love is without a cloud.

November 28, 1869.

SERMON XXXV.

THE LIGHT THAT IS IN US THE LIGHT OF THE LAW OF DUTY.

ST. MATTHEW vi. 23.

'If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!'

THE words 'the light that is in thee' point to a distinction of special importance to all those Christians whose understandings are cultivated at all above the general level. The distinction is in reality the same as that which is implied in the words of St. James, 'The devils also believe and tremble.' There are, St. James means, two kinds of belief: there is one which is quite consistent with wickedness, as well as one which saves the soul. So our Lord here implies that there are two kinds of light: the light that is in thee, namely, as He says just before, the eye is one light; the light that is without thee is another light. The light that is without thee is what we commonly call knowledge. That same knowledge which in some cases, as St. Paul says, puffeth up while charity edifieth. That knowledge may be in itself a most excellent thing. It may mean

a knowledge of God's works. It may mean a knowledge of God's law. It may mean a knowledge of the great doctrines of the Gospel. Excellent is this knowledge, and if it be used aright, it is the appointed guide of the life and conduct. But we may, and we often do find, that the knowledge of right which a man possesses is by no means a sure index of the life that he leads. Repeatedly is it seen that the stupid blundering man, whose bewilderment of intellect makes him quite an unsafe adviser of others, and quite mistaken in the path of his own service, yet for all that is distinctly visibly nearer to God than the clear-headed, keen-sighted, well-instructed man who sees almost by intuition what is the right thing to do, what is the path of duty, what is God's will. And why is this? because while the stupid man has little of the outer light he has much of the inner. His eye is more truly single. His whole view, if dim and imperfect, is pure. He looks at what is before him with the eye of a more heavenly nature. And often men love him and reverence him and follow him, and even take him for their guide, because although he makes so many mistakes, yet in spite of all mistakes he so truly walks with God.

Advent is the great season for searching self-examination. For this purpose it is good to try our lives by plain and definite tests. And I propose to suggest this afternoon such a test, to be used in application to our own lives. And the test that I mean is supplied by these words of our Lord, and I want you to put this question fairly to yourselves now, 'What is the light

that is in me? Is my eye single or not?' Or in other words, 'Under what light do I look at all that I have to do, the life that I have to live, the aims that I allow myself to cherish?'

There are three chief ways in which we should put this question. First look at your life as a whole. What is the drift of it? Is the leading character to be traced in it self-indulgence or obedience to duty? Take it as a whole, look back on it fairly; suppose yourself to be an impartial person; can you see when you look back what is the colour of it, as it were? Can you honestly say before your own conscience that the sense of duty, or the desire to please God, or the desire to please your parents, for these three are nearly the same in different forms, is on the whole that which gives the tone to all the rest? Can you honestly tell your conscience that this life such as you are now living, full of faults, full of slips, full of downright sins, yet nevertheless is penetrated by one thing throughout, namely, a real wish to do right and a real desire to see everything in the light which that wish implies? Or do you find that instead of that there is here and there a fitful sparkle of heavenly light, but that on the whole the colour of the life comes from love of enjoyment, or from indolence, or from pride, or from self-will or from inveterate selfishness? Be honest and say, 'Is this the life of one who stumbles often and falls often, but whose eye steadily gazes on one aim, and one aim only, the law of duty?' Or is such a description quite out of place? And if it is, how is it possible to escape

the sentence, 'If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?'

Yet again, look not only at the life as a whole, but at the impulses of the soul when there is a sudden demand for action. What is generally the thing that presents itself to your mind when there is a sudden choice? Is your instinct to do the selfish or the unselfish thing? Is your impulse to be humble, or to be proud, or to be vain? Is your impulse to be sweet-tempered or to be cross and irritable? Is your impulse to be true or to be false? But it may seem as if this were not a fair test; for our impulses, especially our first impulses, are often not our own, and come from our nature, not our will. Now many of our impulses are really quite independent of us, but not by any means all. Depend upon it if you are living in the light of duty, every day will make it more and more true of you that that light is the first to flash upon you. Be steadily generous, and you will certainly find that in a very little while the first emotions that will stir your heart will always be generous. Be resolutely true, and after a time the truth will rise to your lips almost mechanically. Crush down selfishness with a firm determined will, and you will find that very soon one of the first things to occur to you will be to do whatever is most truly unselfish. I do not mean that temptations will cease, or that duty will in all cases be easier. No, very often the duty will be quite as hard as before. But the movement towards it will be instinctive. When the eye, the inward light, is pure, it sees with a glance.

Is your eye of that sort? Is it more like that than it was? Or are you slow to think of right, and do you see all things not in the light of duty but as they affect your own pleasure for the moment, your own interest for the future?

Lastly, there is yet another occasion at which we should use this same test. For every now and then come critical moments, when we have to make a deliberate choice, when we have to give our thought and our will to what is to be done, when there is no longer room for mere impulse, but the circumstances compel us to know fully, as fully as our capacities will enable us, what it is that we are doing. Such times may no doubt vary very greatly in importance. They may be supreme moments in our lives, and on our decisions may depend the whole current of the rest of our days. One road may lead us straight to nobleness of soul, to truth of character, to purity of heart; the other may lower us permanently to a different rank in the spiritual estimate. Or again, the decision may have no more importance than it gets by being deliberate and expressing the real act of the will. But in either case what is the light that shines upon our path, what is the aim at which our eye is gazing? At these crises, when, if ever, the whole soul is called forth, what is the determining question in our minds? Is it the question of duty and of duty only? Then surely, if ever, we ought to be able to rise to the dignity of self-sacrifice. Then surely above interest, and above pride, and above self-will, and above every attraction

that can draw the soul, ought to stand that one desire to do what is really right which God has set before the conscience as the image of His very self. Then when we cannot plead that there was no time to think, or that the act was not really ours, or that we were blinded by the pressure of instant demand for action, then, if at any time, must the true character of the soul be seen. Then 'If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!'

There is but one light that can enable man to see, and that is the light of a deep sense of duty. Call up from within you, if you would see your way, that which God has placed in the very depth of the soul. Call up that sure conviction which you have even when you know it not, that there is absolutely nothing else in this world whose substance is unchangeable and eternal except only that duty which God has written on your conscience. Compel yourself to recognise that all else will certainly perish, all that you can enjoy, all that you can win, all that you can do, but that the one eternal thing on earth is the duty that has been done in it, or the duty that has been left undone; and when you have done that, you will have for your own the single eye that lights up all the nature; and till you have done that, you will find the sentence true to the letter of yourself and of all your life, 'The light that is in thee is darkness, and how great is that darkness!'

December 5, 1869.

SERMON XXXVI.

GOOD-BYE.

GALATIANS vi. 2.

'*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*'

BY the law of Christ St. Paul plainly means the new commandment which our Lord gave to His disciples, that we should love one another. This is the special commandment of the Gospel, the fulfilment of the Law. This is the one debt which, according to St. Paul, all Christians are to owe one another. This is the new commandment which St. John repeats to the readers of his Epistle, and yet it is nevertheless the old commandment which they had from the beginning. And yet it seems at first a strange thing that this should be the special commandment of the Gospel. Is not the Gospel the most spiritual form of the revelation of God? Does not the Gospel lead us nearer than ever to God? Is not the Gospel the most unworldly of all teaching? How can it be that now for the first time all other commands seem swallowed up in this, that we should love one another? This command in the old Law did not stand first, but second. The love of God was the first thing, the love of our neighbour was the

second thing. But here the love of man seems for the first time as if it cast into the shade the love of God; the love of that which is on earth seems to stand above the love of that which is in heaven: the love of the creature seems to be more emphatically commanded than the love of the Creator. How is this conceivable? and how can we escape the inference that the Gospel has sunk to a lower level than the Law? How can it be that *the* one new commandment of the most spiritual of all possible religions should not be, 'Love God above all else,' 'love holiness,' 'love truth,' 'love justice,' but 'love one another'?

Now the answer, if not already expressed in every one's thoughts, is already felt in every one's heart, that this is the commandment of the Gospel, because in the Gospel for the first time and in the fullest sense the love of God and the love of man are indissolubly united in one. To love one another is to love God, and to love God is to love one another. Just as the Incarnation of our Lord has united for ever the Godhead and the Manhood, so, too, the service of man has become the service of God, and the one way in which we can approach our Maker and Redeemer most truly, most nearly, is by devoting ourselves to the love of our fellows. The divine and the human are connected from the very beginning of the Bible in that fundamental doctrine on which all religion rests, that man was created in the image of God. But though the divine and human are thus connected, yet are they still separated by a gulf so infinite as almost seems to rob the

words of their meaning. More nearly do they approach as we come down the course of revelation. God seems nearer to us in the Prophets than He does in the Law. At last in the Gospel the humanity and the divinity touch. The human conscience partakes in the divine legislation, since whatever is pronounced to be of good report, to be virtue, to be praise, by the one, is acknowledged by the other. And to do anything for man is to do it for the Lord. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.' The love of God is declared impossible without the love of man. 'He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?' And it may be said that the Incarnation of our Lord is no isolated mystery, but fills all the New Testament with its power.

And in the passage with which I began, St. Paul puts the commandment into the form which it will most commonly take in life. The fulfilment of the command is to bear one another's burdens. There are burdens to be borne, work to be done, trials to be endured by the soldiers and servants of Christ. Sometimes courage, and sometimes patience, and sometimes perseverance, and sometimes resignation, will be the chief demand made on our strength. And all through we may help one another, and we shall find that the strength of two is far more than twice the strength of one, and that that creation of new force which has been pronounced impossible in the physical world, is the every-day experience of the spiritual world. To help one another

was always a duty, but to us Christians it has become a double duty,—a duty beyond expression higher, and more excellent, and more imperative; for it is our appointed worship of God, it is the special mode by which Christ has desired us to prove our obedience to Himself; it is the fulfilment of His one new commandment, and he who is helping his brother knows for certain that whatever else may be or may not be the service of Christ, this at any rate certainly is.

And as in this new commandment we may see that the divine has, as it were, come down to the human, so has it lifted the human up to the divine. 'Bear one another's burdens' is the fulfilment of the command. Bear what burdens? Bear the burdens, plainly, that are needed for the spiritual life, as is shown by the whole context of the passage. Help one another to serve the Lord cheerfully, manfully, truthfully. Help one another to be nobler, purer, more unselfish, braver. Help one another to show more clearly the image of God, in which we are all created. Help one another by removing stumbling-blocks, by a high example, by the infection of a pure devotedness, by the contact of an unworldly spirit. Help one another by the life and conversation which shows a heavenly aim. Help one another by the kindnesses which touch the feelings, by the tenderness which stirs the heart, by the self-sacrifices which bind soul to soul, by the watchful friendship which observes what it is that is needed, by the word of encouragement spoken in season, by the hearty look which cheers the wavering courage; yes, and by the frank word which

points out a fault, and yet never makes too much of it; by the readiness to forgive, which makes repentance warm and full, by that gentle acceptance of a confession of wrong which makes amendment easy. We know well that there is nothing on earth which helps man more in his path of duty than the presence of one who loves to do his own duty, and loves to make duty easier to others. Better than all sermons, better than all guidance, the help which spirit gives to spirit in the intercourse of a noble life.

This help we can give each other best when we live together, and share the same society, and join in the same work, and see much of each other's faces, and hear each other's words. When we are so living together, we are what the Old Testament calls neighbours, we are what the New Testament calls brothers. The duties which we owe each other may possibly be dormant, not yet called into action, or again may be in abeyance for want of any opportunity, as long as we are apart. But when we are brought together we become neighbours and brothers, and the commandment gets all its meaning, and is unlimited in fulness and breadth. Yet it would be entirely wrong to suppose that when friends are parted, even though they part, in a certain sense, for life, and expect no more to work together, they can do no more to bear each other's burdens, and that the commandment no longer applies to them. Nay, in some senses the commandment has a new and greater force than ever. It is when they are parted that friends can help each other

by that hearty mutual trust which is ennobling at once to the trusting and the trusted. Nothing purifies and elevates a man's heart so much as to know, that though his friends cannot see him nor observe his conduct, and though they perfectly well know him to be capable of great mistakes and sometimes of real falls, yet they trust thoroughly in his uprightness of soul, in his unselfishness and generosity of aim, in his subordination of himself to his duty. Nothing, on the other hand, gives greater firmness and constancy to the character than that unwavering trust which a man puts in his friends that they are faithful and true to their principles, that if he cannot always understand them, he can always be sure that at bottom their hearts are sound and their aims are noble. Every man, when he knows that he is trusted, finds within himself a miraculous spiritual strength, a living power, a thrilling spring of courage in answer to the trust. Every man when he trusts, learns a lesson of sure faith, of generous charity, of superiority to mere appearances, of recognition of the bond of brotherhood. How wonderfully both men find that they have gained when at last they meet, and the first glance of each in the other's face speaks of mutual trust, and mutual truth to the trust. And as with trust, so is it too with sympathy. If when friends are parted the ordinary expressions of sympathy must cease and neither can find in the other the help which a kindred spirit alone can give, yet the silent sympathy which each is certain that the other feels begins to exercise a magical and unexpected power, and one who

once worked with friends all around him, yet is cheered by the knowledge that he neither forgets nor is forgotten, and that the sympathy which cannot speak or look is living still. Absence seems in some way to make the sympathy of man like that of the angels in heaven. They are said to rejoice when the sinner repents, but here on earth there is no visible token of their joy. They are said to be ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation, but there is no visible trace of their ministry. Nay, the trust and sympathy of absent friends in all trials and in all labours, is it not by so much the more like the trust and sympathy of our Lord Himself whom we can see no longer; who has hidden Himself behind the veil which shuts out the other world from this, but who trusts us to do His work and bids us trust absolutely in Him, who assuredly feels with us in all that happens, and who bids us feel with Him?

The time has come when we are to part. For twelve years have I laboured here. The lines of the work were laid down by a great servant of the Lord when I was yet a boy, and others followed him and did their part, and now I have taken my turn in building up that spiritual temple which Arnold first planned. I have seen many go away to other scenes and other duties as God's Providence ordained. And now I go myself. But though we shall be parted, yet we can still help each other. Still that self-sacrifice to duty which Arnold taught and lived, still that preference for the true, and the pure, and the just, and the good, to all else whatever

it may be, still the eye fixed steadily on the will of our Master Christ, may be the ideal at which we aim, and bind us close together. Still may we be true to each other's friendship, and true to the Christian principles that we have professed to live by, and if so we shall assuredly help in bearing each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

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